ṚGVEDA DARŚANA

VOLUME 3

GĀYATRI MANTRA

Vidyālankāra

S. K. RAMACHANDRA RAO

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RGVEDA DARSANA

A SET OF THIRTEEN VOLUMES

VOLUME THREE

Gayatri Mantra

Vidyalankara

Prof S. K. Ramachandra Rao

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Introduction

In this and the next volume, the third and fourth in the series, the traditional approach has been illustrated. Traditionally the study of the RgVeda begins with the Pranava (Omkara) and proceeds with the Vyahrtis (Bhuh, Bhuvaha and Suvah), the Gayatri Mantra and the Purusha Sukta. The Purusha Sukta is regarded as the epitome of the entire Vedic canon, and as having taken shape from the Gayatri Mantra. It is an elaboration of the Gayatri Mantra, even as the three padas of the Gayatri Mantra have grown out of the three Vyahrtis and the Vyahrtis themselves are elaborations of the three constituent units of the Pranava (a, u and m). It is therefore that tradition insists that the study must follow this line of development.

S. K. Ramachandra Rao

The appendix to this volume in the first edition contained four important expositions of the Sandhya ritual and explanation of the mantras employed therein (in Sanskrit). (The Sandhya ritual is principally the worship of the solar spirit represented by Gayatri, known as Sandhya). This appendix was taken from the Sanskrit text, *Sandhya Bhasya Samucchaya,* published by the Anandashram Samskrita Granthavali, 1919. We plan to reprint this text as part of our Prachina Grantha Mala series shortly, and therefore this has not been included in this edition.

S. R. Sudarshan

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CHAPTER ONE

PRELUDE

(1)
THE TEXT OF ṚGVEDA

Ṛgveda-samhitā constitutes a collection of single stanzas or verses called ṛks (ṛchām samūho vedah ṛgvedah). The expression 'ṛk' etymologically means praise or eulogy (stutyarthā ṛch dhātu, in sampadādi-gaṇa with kvip-pratyaya).

Nirukta (2,23) gives it as one of the fifty-seven synonyms of 'vāk' (word, expression). It is closely associated with the word 'svara' (svaryate anayā, "the gods are invited by it"), which is inspired by the life principle (prāṇa) while uttering.

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Another synonym 'sarasvati' means the speech at the mādhyamika level (sṛ gatyarthe, mādhyamikā vāk), discussed earlier. A ṛk is thus different from ordinary speech (called vaikharī); and is nearer to the visions in trance (paśyantī).

The text of *Ṛgveda-samhitā,* that is presented here follows what is known as the Śākala (or Śākalaka) recension. It is one of the two major recensions that has had a wide-spread appeal through the centuries in the country. And there are ancient and mediaeval 'anukramaṇis' (tables of content, indeces of mantras, anuvāka-divisions, the ṛshis responsible for the mantras, the devatās that are eulogized and invoked in the mantras, the chhandas or metrical forms assumed by the mantras, and other particulars regarding the chanting and practical employment of the mantras) concerning the Śākala recension of the Ṛgvedic corpus. The oldest and the most authentic of these 'anukramaṇīs' are those by Śaunaka, who is credited with having prepared ten works meant exclusively to preserve the tradition of Ṛgveda ('śaunakīyā daśā-granthās tadā ṛgveda-guptaye'). This Śaunaka is also the author of *Bṛhad-devatā.* Kātyāyana, his student, has compiled a comprehensive and extensively informative anukramaṇi, known as *Sarvānukramaṇī.* This work, with an excellent gloss on it by Shaḍguru śishya (a vṛtti called *Vedārtha-dīpika*), whose date is given as 1187 A.D., has been in the main utilized here for providing the preliminary particulars. About this work, details will be given later.

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Tradition holds that there as many as twenty-one recensions for *Ṛgveda-saṃhitā*. Patañjali, for instance, explicitly states so (*Mahābhāshya,* paspaśāhnika):

एकविंशतिधा बाह्वृच्यम् ॥

Charaṇa-vyūha, which accepts this estimate; enumerates five main divisions: (i) Śākala, (2) Bāshkala, (3) Śānkhāyana, (4) Muṇḍukeya, and (5) Āśvalayana. Each of these divisions, barring the last, had five branches (śākhās), thus making twenty-one recensions. *Atharva-pariśishṭa* adds two more : Sāndhyāyana and Audumbarāyaṇa. However, we have at present only Śākala and Bāshkala recensions, and some portions of Āśvalāyana recension. Others are no longer extant. And of the two recensions that are extant almost in their entirety, Śākala-recension is what is generally prevalent.

The recensions are named after the sages, who took it upon themselves to correct, codify, organize, preserve and perpetuate the text of the Vedic-corpus as they had received it. The communication of the text was from teacher to pupil, who was not infrequently the teacher's own son or descendent. The recensions differed amongst themselves only in matters of minor importance (as may be gathered not only from the extant recensions but from the details provided in the anukramaṇīs), such as the inclusion or exclusion of what are known as the Khila-passages (to be explained presently), the order of

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the hymns in recitation (pāṭha-krama) and addition of supplementary texts (pariśishṭas). The main text of the Samhitā was preserved intact and in its pristine purity, irrespective of the periodical recensions, thanks to such well-considered contrivances as the standard metrical form (chhandas), the precise, discrete and meaningful word-structures (pada-pāṭha, the multi-dimensional methods of recitation (veda-pārāyaṇa-goshṭhī). This is extraordinary, especially when we realize that the samhitās were all along communicated only in oral tradition (which is even now the case) and were never committed to writing until recent years.

Significant among the details that distinguish the recensions is the incorporation or otherwise of the Khila-sūktas in the very body of the text. The Khila-sūktas are hymns that belong elsewhere in actuality but introduced on purpose as additional matter into a regular collection of hymns in a recension ("para-śākhīyam sva-śakhāyām apekshā-vaśāt paṭhyate, tat khilam uchyate'). They may be with some justification regarded as interpolations. Examples of these are the Vālakhilya-sūktas (RV,8,49-59), Śrīsūkta (RV, at the end of the fifth maṇḍala), Rātri-sūkta (RV, after 10, 127) and Medhā-sūkta (RV, after 10, 151). There are about thirty-five such Khila-hymns in the *Ṛgveda-samhitā* recensions. In the Śākala-recension, for instance, the Vālakhilya-sūktas (eleven in number) are altogether excluded from the text, thus making the total number of sūktas in the corpus 1018 (or 1017), whereas in

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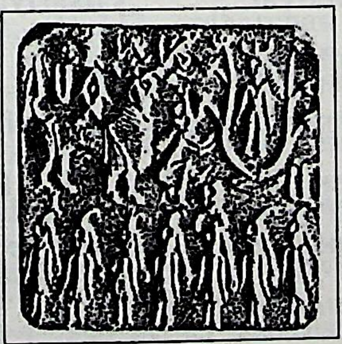
the Bāshkala-recension eight of these sūktas (described as Vālakhilya) are integral parts of the text, thus the total number of sūktas in the corpus is given as 1025.

These are the two prominent recensions of the Ṛgvedic corpus among the twenty-one traditionally counted. Shaḍguru-śishya says as much:

एकविंशतिशाखस्य बह्वृचस्य महर्षिभिः ।
कल्पितः कल्पितारोऽभूद् ऋग्वेद इव पारगः ॥
शाकलस्य संहितैका बाष्कलस्य तथाऽपरः ।
ते संहिते समाश्रित्य ब्राह्मणान्येकविंशतिः ॥



As was mentioned earlier, it is the Śākala-recension that is popular, persistent and prevalent. Shaḍguru-śishya explains the expression 'Śākala' as the text handed down by the sage Śākalya ('śākalyochchāraṇam śākalam'). This sage, also known as Deva-mitra (or Veda-mitra), came in the lineage of Indra-pramati, who was a disciple of Paila, the universally recognized ancient authority on the Ṛgvedic corpus. Paila had another student, Bāshkala, whose name is associated with the other recension, and whose lineage continued in four branches (through his disciples Baudhya, Agni-māṭhara, Parāśara and Jatūkarṇya). However, it is Indra-pramati's lineage that is credited with immense antiquity and impeccable purity. Indra-pramati's direct disciple was Māṇḍukeya, a resident of the

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Magadha country and an influential master. The adherents of his school came to be known as 'Bahvṛchas' (a term synonymous with the Ṛgvedic corpus). After him, Satya-śravā, Satya-hita and Satya-śrī continued the tradition.

Satya-śrī had three brilliant disciples of whom Śākalya was one. Rathītara-Śākapūṇi (author of a pre-Yāskan *Nirukta*) and Bāshkali-Bhāradvāja (who owed allegiance to the Bāshkala-śākhā) were the other two. Śākalya, in turn, had five disciples, who were responsible for the spread of this recension: Mudgala (who lived in the Anga country, the presentday Bihar), Bābhravya (who hailed from the Pāñchāla-deśa, the modern Uttar-pradesh), Gvāliya, Gārgya and Śaiśiri.

The last-mentioned disciple of Śākalya, Śaiśiri or Śaiśari, whose other name was Maitreya, according to *Vishṇu-purāṇa,* 3,4), was closely associated with Vyāḍi of the Vyākaraṇa celebrity. A student of his was Śākaṭāyana, who made a mark for himself in the Vedic exegesis. Śaiśiri is credited with a recension of his own (called *Śaiśirīya-saṁhitā*), but within the general framework of his master's; hence the statement in *Ṛksarvānukramaṇī,* 'śākalye śaiśirīyake'. Uvaṭa's commentary on this work explains: 'śākalaka iti, tad dṛshṭatvāt: śaiśarīyakamity abhidhīyate'. It is probable that this recension evolved a science of metrical forms in which the Ṛgvedic hymnology was put (for we read in *Chhandonukramaṇī:* 'śāstram chākhilam śaiśirīye'). Śaiśiri's work

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was so important that the Śākala-recension came to be known only after Śaiśirī's edition (with amendments) of it. *Anuvākānukramaṇī*, for instance, speaks of 'ṛgvede śaiśiriyāyām samhitāyām'. And it is this Śaiśiri-śākhā that the versatile Vedic commentator, Sāyaṇa, generally follows.

In the Śākala recension as settled by Śaiśiri, the Ṛgvedic corpus is arranged in ten books (called maṇḍalas), sixty-four chapters (adhyāya) and 2006 sections (varga). The text consists of 10,580 pādas (lines), 21,232 ardharchas (half stanzas), 1, 53, 826 padas (separate words) and 4,32,000 aksharas (individual letters). There are two ways in which the text of Ṛgveda is arranged. The earlier and the more systematic arrangement is in terms of maṇḍalas. Maṇḍala strictly means round or a circle. In the Ṛgveda text, the word maṇḍala refers to the collection of hymns according to the sages who were the seers, or to the families of such sages (ṛshi-maṇḍala). Each maṇḍala is distinguished by a single sage or members of the family of that sage. And the maṇḍalas a book consists of a large number of sūktas ('well said', 'properly recited', collection of individual hymns, or songs of praise or prayers, each sūkta being usually associated with one or more devatās. The sūkta is defined in *Bṛhaddevata* (1,13) as the complete statement of a seer, a comprehensive verbal expression of his vision: संपूर्णं ऋषिवाक्यं तु सूक्तमित्यभिधीयते ॥ If the maṇḍala is 'ṛshi-specific', the sūkta may be described as 'devatā-specific'

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(e.g. Agni-sūkta, Indra-sūkta, Vāyu-sūkta, Vishṇu-sūkta etc.), though there are exceptions to this. In between 'maṇḍala' and śūkta', there are 'anuvākas' (or lessons), which are chapters having sūktas as sections thereof. And a sūkta in its turn is a collection of ṛks (or mantras), which are in the nature of stanzas or verses, addressed to one or several devatās and in one or more metrical forms (chhandas). Given below is the table of maṇḍalas, sūktas and ṛks that we find in the standard Śākala recension of *Ṛgveda-samhitā:*

Notes:

1. Śatarchina are sages who have by themselves seen each of the hundred or more ṛks or individual verses, as for instance, Madhuch chandā verses 1 to 102; Medhātithi-Kāṇva 111 to 253, or Ājīgarti-Śunahśepa 254-350 in the first maṇḍala. Others in this Maṇḍala are also described as Śatarchinas, because of their association with Madhucchhandā-Vaiśvāmitra who is the first seer of a hundred (actually a hundred and two) verses and therefore called a 'śatarchi'. They belong, however, to different families.

2. If the sages in the first maṇḍala are called Śatarchina, the sages of the second to the ninth maṇḍalas are called 'madhyamas'.

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Maṇḍala	Ṛshi	Anuvāka	Sūkta	Mantra or ṛk
1	Śatarchina	24	191	2,006
2	Gṛtsamada	4	43	429
3	Viśvāmitra	5	62	617
4	Vāmadeva(Gotama)	5	58	589
5	Atri	6	87	727
6	Bharadvāja	6	75	765
7	Vasishṭha	6	104	841
8	Kaṇva	10	92 (excluding Khila-Vālakhilyas); otherwise 103	1,636 (excluding Khila-Vāla khilyas); otherwise 1,716
9	Pāvamānyāh	7	114	1,108
10	many ṛshis	12	191	1,754
		85	1,017	10,472
			When in the 8th maṇḍala the Vālakhilya sūktas (khila) are added in the other recension:	
			11	80
	Total		1,028	10,552

3. The seers of the eighth maṇḍala are associated with Kaṇva, who was responsible for sixty-one out of the 103 sūktas in this maṇḍala (including the Vālakhilya-sūktas). This maṇḍala is described as headed by the sage Pragātha in *Āśvalāyana gṛhya-sūtra,* because the very first

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sūkta in this maṇḍala has Pragātha as its ṛshi.

4. The ninth maṇḍala has many seers, belonging to different families; however, they are all described as 'pāvamānya', because all of them alike have praised Soma-pavamāna, who is the only devatā for all the sūktas in this maṇḍala.

5. The seers of the last, viz. tenth, maṇḍala are likewise numerous, and belong to different families. They are grouped into classes: 'mahāsūkta' (seers of long hymns, beginning with the first hymn in this maṇḍala and until, and inclusive of, the well-known hymn known as 'Nāsadīya-sūkta'), and 'kshudra-sūkta' (seers of the remaining hymns in the maṇḍala, viz. 130 to 191).

cf. *Āśvalāyana-gṛhya-sūtra:*

अथ ऋषयः शतर्चिनो। माध्यमा गृत्समदो
विश्वामित्रो वामदेवोऽत्रिर्भरद्वाजो वसिष्ठः प्रगाथाः
पावमान्यः। क्षुद्रसूक्तमहासूक्ता इति ॥

The second method of arranging the text of the Ṛgveda-samhitā was later and is more mechanical. The divisions and subdivisions into maṇḍalas and sūktas are uneven in extent, and somewhat difficult for memorizing and reciting the mantras, although this method is excellent for study. In order to facilitate recitation, the material in the text had to be more or less evenly distributed. And this was achieved by the Ashṭaka-classification. The entire text was divided into eight books (ashṭaka). Each book was further divided into eight chapters (adhyāya), and each

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chapter into many sections (varga); the sūktas were also more or less evenly distributed. We can see that there is a greater uniformity here with regard to the size of the sections and the number of sūktas and mantras in each section. Given below is the table of Ashṭaka division.

Ashṭaka	Adhyāya	Sūkta	Varga	Mantra	No. of Aksharas
1	8	121	265	1.370	48.931
2	8	119	221	1,147	51.718
3	8	122	225	1,209	47.636
4	8	140	250	1,289	49,762
5	8	129	238	1,263	48.022
6	8	135	331	1.730	51.456
7	8	116	248	1,263	47.562
8	8	146	246	1,281	52,178
8	64	1.017	2.006	10.472	3,94.221
When the Khila-Sūktas (Vālakhilya) are added		11	18	80	3.044
Total		1028	2,024	10.552	3.97,265

[(Note : *Anuvākānukarmaṇī* gives the figures as follows: 64 adhyāyas. 10 maṇḍalas. 2.006 vargas; 10.580 mantras (ṛk-pāda). 21,232 ardharcha, 1.53,826 padas (words) and 4,32.000 aksharas (letters)].

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Although the total number of mantras (ṛks) in the text is generally accepted as 10,552 (in Śākala-śaiśiri and Bāshkala recensions), there are other figures suggested by the anukramaṇīs and pariśishṭas, the differences arising out of grouping the ṛchas sometimes as two-lined (dvipadā) or four-quartered (chatushpada), taking at times a mantra as only an ardharcha, occasionally clubbing the mantras together and counting the dvipadās separately. *Laugākshi-smṛti,* for instance, gives 10,580 as the total number of mantras (ṛṅgmāna), that become relevant in a recitational exercise:

ऋचां दशसहस्राणि ऋचां पञ्चशतानि च ।
ऋचामशीतिः पादश्च पारायणविधौ खलु ॥

This figure is accepted also in Śaunaka''s *Anuvākānukramaṇī.* But Mahīdāsa, the commentator on *Charaṇa-vyūha,* and Jagannātha, the glossator on *Sarvānukramaṇī,* hold on to 10,552 as the total number of the mantras. According to them, however, this figure includes the ṛks in the Vālakhilya-sūktas (Khila); if we exclude them, the total figure for the ṛks would be 10,472. While the Vālakhilya-sūktas are included in the text when study (adhyayana) is undertaken, they are excluded during ritualistic recitation (pārāyaṇa). Mahīdāsa explains that the total number of ṛks in the text would be 10,552, when the Vālakhilya-sūktas are omitted ('vālakhilya-vyatirikta-samkhyā'), and 10,402 if the dvipadās

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are not counted. He also mentions that the custom was to exclude the Vālakhilya-sūktas during recitation (pārāyaṇa):

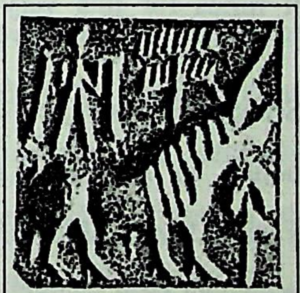
एतत् पारायणम् वालखिल्येन विना संख्यातम् ।
वालखिल्यानि पारायणे न सन्ति ॥

Another work, which deals with the nature and number of various metrical forms (chhandas) of the mantras, *Chhandas-sankhyā-pariśishṭa,* gives the total number of ṛks in the text as 10,402, counting the ṛks grouped in specific metrical forms. Veṅkaṭa-mādhava, an early commentator on *Ṛgveda*, also accepts this figure.

As regards the total number of aksharas (letters) in the Vedic corpus, *Śatapatha-brāhmaṇa* (10,4,2,23) has this to say:

स ऋचो व्यौहत द्वादश बृहतीसहस्राणि
एतावत्यो ह्यचो याः प्रजापतिसृष्टाः ॥

The figure, according to this text, would be 4,32,000 (12000X36); and this is the 'akshara-māna' accepted in Śaunaka's *Anuvākānumkramaṇī.* But the Anukramaṇī specifies that *Ṛgveda-samhitā* has only 3,97,265 aksharas. It is probable, therefore, that the Brāhmaṇa estimate includes the ṛks found in the other Vedas also.



(2)

ṚSHI, DEVATĀ, CHHANDAS

It has already been explained (in Volume One) that the study or

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recitation of any mantra in the *Ṛgveda* must invariably be accompained by a formal acknowledgement of the seer who was responsible for the mantra (ṛshi), the deity to whom the mantra is addressed (devatā), and the particular metrical form in which the mantra is articulated (chhandas). The preservation of these three details was regarded as an important aspect of the perpetuation of the Vedic tradition. The anukramaṇis were prepared in ancient times for this very purpose.

Shaḍguru-śishya, in the introduction to his gloss (vṛtti) on Kātyāyana's *Sarvānukramaṇī*, recalls that the ancient sage Śaunaka prepared ten works, most of which were in the nature of anukramaṇīs, in order to preserve intact and perpetuate without a break the Ṛgvedic tradition:

शौनकीया दशग्रन्थास्तदा ऋग्वेदगुप्तये ।
आर्षानुक्रमणीत्याद्या छान्दसी दैवती तथा ॥
अनुवाकानुक्रमणी सूक्तानुक्रमणी तथा ।
ऋक्पादयोर्विधाने च बार्हद्दैवतमेव च ।
प्रातिशाख्यं शौनकीयं स्मार्तं दशममुच्यते ॥

The first work is *Ārshānukramaṇī*, the index of the ṛshis in verse form, consisting of 292 (or in another account 320) ślokas. The second work is *Chhandonukramaṇī*, an index of the metrical forms, also in verse form, in ten maṇḍalas and 388 slokas. The third work, *Devatānukramaṇī*, an index of the devatās to whom the mantras are addressed, is unfortunately no longer available. The fourth work deals with the Anuvākas and the fifth with the sūktas. The sixth work is the well-known *Ṛgvidhāna* (in verse form, consisting of five adhyāyas and 758 ślokas), with a closely related title,

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Pāda-vidhāna, as the seventh. The next work of Śaunaka is also his *magnum opus, Bṛhaddevatā;* and we have dealt with this work elaborately in Volume Two. The ninth work is Ṛk-*pratiśākhya,* the oldest among works on this topic; in 18 paṭalas it explains svara, varṇa, chhandas etc. related to the Śākala-recension. The last mentioned work, *Śaunakīya-smṛti*, is said to have been destroyed by Śaunaka himself, when he realized that his favourite student Āśvalāyana had prepared a magnificent smṛti, based on all the works of Śaunaka. Shaḍguru-śishya says:

सहस्रखण्डं स्वकृतं सूत्रब्राह्मणसन्निभम् ।
शिष्याश्वलायनप्रीत्यै शौनकेन विपाटितम् ॥

Śaunaka's disciple, Kātyāyana, summarized several works of his master, in *Sarvānukramaṇī,* which is at once terse, comprehensive and authoritative. This work, in aphoristic, style, is in two parts; the first part being known as '*Paribhāshā*' (in twelve kaṇḍikas or sections, comprising of 117 sūtras) and the second 'Sarvānukrama' (in 64 Kaṇḍikas, and 1060 sūtras). This work closely follows the Śākala-recension of *Ṛgveda-samhitā.* The value of this remarkable work has greatly been enhanced by an elaborate and insightful gloss by Shaḍguru-śishya, whose name has already been mentioned. This glassator describes himself as a disciple of six masters, the six being Gaṇeśa, Śiva, Vishṇu, Sūrya, Vyāsa and Śiva-yogi, of whom the last alone may have been a human teacher.

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विनायकः शूलपाणिर्मुकुन्दः
सूर्यो व्यासः शिवयोगीति षड् वै ।
नमामि तान् सर्वदा पान्तु मां ते
यैर्वै षाड्भिः सप्तविद्यास्तु दत्ताः ॥

The seven branches of learning that he obtained from these masters are: Sarvānukramaṇi, Mahāvrata and the two upanishads (?), Mahāvrata-Sūtra (the sūtra section of *Aitareya-āraṇyaka*), *Chatvārimśad-brāhmaṇa*, *Nirukta-sūtra*, *Gṛhya-sūtra* and *Śākalya-samhitā* ('imā dattā vidyās tu sadbhir yair vai shaḍbhyo gurubhyo hi namostu tebhyah'). We do not know if he has written any works other than the gloss (vṛtti), called *Vedārtha-dīpikā*, on Kātyāyana's *Sarvānukramaṇī*. According to the glossator, Kātyāyana wrote his work by the power of his penance ('tapo-yogān nirmame yah sarvānukramaṇīm imām'). Uvaṭa also has prepared a commentary (bhāshya) on Kātyāyana's work.

The 'Paribhāshā' section of Kātyāyana's work sets out to give details of ṛshi, daivata and chhandas as he has been taught by his master:

अथ ऋग्वेदाम्नाये शाकलके सूक्त प्रतीकत्रृक्संख्य-
ऋषिदैवतछन्दांस्यनुक्रमिष्यामो यथोपदेशम् ॥

These details are necessary because one who engages himself in ritual or in study without knowing these details in every mantra will be ineffective in his life or falls into a pit (of troubles) and he becomes sinful, according to *Ārsheya-brāhmaṇa* (1,1):

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यो ह वा अविदार्षेयच्छन्दोदैवतब्राह्मणेन
मन्त्रेण याजयति
वाऽध्यापयति वा स्थाणु वर्च्छति गर्तं वा
पद्यति प्र वा
मीयते पापीयान् भवतीति विज्ञायते ...
तस्मादेतानि मन्त्रे मन्त्रे विद्यात् ॥

Kātyāyana, following this lead, insists that all rituals prescribed in śrauta-sūtras like agni-hotra, and all household rituals from 'nisheka' (prior to actual birth) to 'smaśāna' (after death) become altogether ineffective, without the knowledge of ṛshi etc. (2):

न ह्येतज्ज्ञानमृते श्रौतस्मार्तप्रसिद्धिः ॥

On the other hand, the person who is acquainted thoroughly with ṛshi, devatā and chhandas of the mantras prospers when he employs these mantras in rituals or when he teaches these mantras (3):

मन्त्राणां ब्राह्मणार्षेयच्छन्दोदैवतविद्
याजनाध्यापनाभ्यां श्रेयोऽधिगच्छति ॥

Uvaṭa quotes in this connection the following verses from *Bṛhad-devatā* (8,131-133)

मन्त्राणां देवताविद् यः प्रयुङ्क्ते कर्म कर्हिचित् ।
जुषन्ते तस्य देवासो हविर्नादेवताविदः ॥
स्वाध्यायमेव योऽधीते मन्त्रदैवतविच्छुचिः ।
असत्रसदपि स्वर्गे सत्रसद्भिरपीड्यते ॥

and adds

परिज्ञाने श्रेयोऽधिगमोऽपरिज्ञाने दोषाभाव इति तत्र ॥

Those who disregard this knowledge and become indifferent to the anukramaṇis, while engaging themselves in rituals or in study will fail to be protected by the Vedic tradition or to profit by it (4):

एताभ्यामेवानेवंविदो यातयामानि
च्छन्दांसि भवन्ति ॥

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(*etābhyām,* yajana-adhyāpanābhyam; *anevam-vidah,* sarvānukramaṇyajñasya; *chhandāmsi,* vedāh; *yātayāmāni*; *yātah,* prāptah, *yāmah,* uparamā, phala-rakshāvishaye audāsīnyam)

According to *Taittiriya-āraṇyaka* (2,9) the ṛshi is one who sees (envisions, perceives in his heart) the praises in verse-form (so say the Aupamanyavas), and this is made possible by the austerites that he engages himself in.

ऋषिर्दर्शनात् स्तोमान् ददर्शेत्यौपमन्यवः ।
तद्यदेनांस्तपस्यमानान् ब्रह्म स्वयंभ्वभ्यानर्षत्त
ऋषयोऽभवंस्तदृषीणां ऋषित्वमिति विज्ञायते ॥

Shaḍguru-śishya undertakes to define who a ṛshi is:

ऋषिर्द्रष्टा । ऋषयोऽनागतातीतवर्तमानार्थवेदिनः ।
अर्तेः सनोतेश्च ऋषिशब्दो निरुच्यते ॥

He is a seer, he has the direct a vision of the mantras. The seers have access to knowledge to of things present, past and future. Kātyāyana provides the information that in the first maṇḍala of *Ṛgveda-samhitā*, there are three classes of ṛshis:

अथ ऋषयः । शतर्चिन आद्ये मण्डलेऽन्त्ये
क्षुद्रसूक्तमहासूक्ता मध्यमा मध्यमेषु ॥

(cf. *Bṛhad-devatā*, 3, 116:
आद्ये मण्डले ज्ञेयाः ऋषयसु शतर्चिनः ।
क्षुद्रसूक्तमहासूक्ता अन्ये मध्येषु मध्यमाः ॥)

Among the ṛshis of the *Ṛgveda*, the mantras of the first maṇḍala were made possible by the group of seers known as 'śatarchina' (authors of a hundred ṛks'). However, not all of them can be credited with this prowess. But associated with the

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'śatarchina-seers, they also pass by that name. Like one not having an umbrella amidst a large number of people carrying umbrellas will be included in the expression 'those having umbrellas'. Shaḍguru-śishya explains:

आद्यमण्डलस्था ऋषयः शतर्चिन इति संज्ञिताः ।
ऋचां शतं शतर्चम् । ऋक्शतयोगेन छत्रिन्यायेन
शतर्चिनः सर्वे । द्व्यधिकेऽपि शतोक्ति बाहुल्यात्।

And he quotes earlier verses:

शतर्चिसंज्ञा विज्ञेया ह्याद्यमण्डलदर्शिनः ।
ददर्शादौ मधुच्छन्दा द्व्यधिकं यदृचां शतम् ।
तत्साहचर्याच्छत्रिणैकेन यथा वै छत्रिणोऽभवन् ॥

Madhuchchhandā, for instance, has been responsible for two more than a hundred verses; still he is called a 'śatarchi. There are others in the first maṇḍala whose vision of the mantras does not reach a hundred, and they are also called 'śatarchina'. This is because of their association with the family of Madhuchhanda-vaiśvāmitra, and the number hundred is significant while grouping the seers of the first maṇḍala.

The seers of the last maṇḍala ('antye') are, as previously explained Kshudra-sūktas and Mahāsūktas; while the seers of the maṇḍalas second to the ninth are called 'madhyamas' ('dvitīyādi nava maṇḍelushu')

Uvaṭa says:

प्रथमे मण्डले मधुच्छन्दःप्रभृतयोऽगस्तिपर्यन्ताः सर्वे एते शऌर्चिनः । अन्त्ये दशमे मण्डले त्रितप्रभृतयः संवननपर्यन्ताः क्षुद्रसूक्तमहासूक्ताः । मध्यमेषु द्वितीयादिषु नवमावसानेषु गृत्समदप्रभृतयः कश्यपपर्यन्ताः माध्यमा इति ॥

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Uvaṭa further explains that the relationship between the seer and the devatā is one of object of praise and the person who praises; the former is the devatā and the latter the seer.

ऋषिदैवतयोः स्तुत्यस्तावकभावस्य नियतत्वात् स्तुत्यैव देवता ऋषिश्च स्तुतिप्रयोक्तैवेति । तथा चाह - (quotes from Bṛhad-devatā, 1,6)

अर्थमिच्छन् ऋषिर्देवं यं यमाहायमस्त्विति ।
प्राधान्येन स्तुवन्भक्त्या मन्त्रस्तद्देवत इति ॥

According to Uvaṭa, this verse explains the real nature of the devata (devatāsattva-pratipādana)

Kātyāyayana's definition of a ṛshi follows Yāska's (cf. *Nirukta*,2,11 'ṛshir darśanāt') (4):

यस्यं वाक्यं स ऋषिः ॥

The 'Vākya' here refers to the mantras, of which the ṛshi is the seer. And whoever (or whatever) is addressed by the seer in the mantra is the devatā (5):

या तेनोच्यते सा देवता ॥
(वृत्ति-तेन वाक्येन यत् प्रतिपाद्यं वस्तु सा देवता ॥)

The number of letters that determines the extent of the mantra is the 'chhandas' (6):

यदक्षरपरिमाणं तच्छन्दः ॥

The three details are interdependent. Having their own

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purposes in view, the seer approaches the deities with faith and fervour with mantras in appropriate metrical forms (7):

अर्थेप्सव ऋषयो देवताश्छन्दोभिरभ्यधावन् ॥

(वृत्ति। अर्थ्यते फलं, अन्नपुत्रादिमोक्षान्तं अर्थं आत्माधीनं कर्तुमिच्छन्तः मधुच्छन्द प्रभृतयः सवनान्ता ऋषयः । देवताः सूक्तहविर्भागिनीः छन्दोभिः गायत्र्यादिभिः उपायभूतैः तद्युक्तमन्त्रैर्वा । अर्थस्य प्राप्तै । अयमेवोपाय इति दृढसंकल्पाः । यादृगिव वै देवेभ्यः करोति तादृगिवाऽस्मै देवाः कुर्वन्ति ॥)

The purpose of the seer may be anything: from the material and mundane benefits (like food and progeny) to the final spiritual perfection. A seer is by no means a renunciant or a recluse; he is a normal householder, with his own share of worries, desires and problems. But he has turned his attention inward, and has taken to the path of penances. But this does not, however, make him any the less normal. He is not indifferent to the persons and objects around him, but he seeks to be the master of the situation, (ārthapatya) as the glossator points out. The means that he employs is effective but mystic speech known as chhandas.

Uvaṭa however points out that the seers approached the devatā by mantras in chhandas, in order to understand the real nature of the devatā; this is the purpose uppermost in the minds of the seers:

प्रयोजनेप्सवः छन्दोभिर्मन्त्रैरुपधावन् । अस्तुति पूर्वकं प्रार्थना । हन्ताहं देवतामुपधावामीति प्रयोगदर्शनात् । देवतास्वरूप निर्दधारयिषयेदमाह ॥

There can be no devatā unless he (or she) is articulated in a chhandas; and there can be no chhandas without

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the vision of the seer inspiring it. The vision of the seer is not accidental or inanre; it is deliberate and purposeful (arthepsā). Shaḍguru-śishya cites a number of Ṛgvedic verses to illustrate the nature of the ṛshi's deliberation:

न मृषा श्रान्तं यदवन्ति देवाः (1,179,3)
अव स्तोमेभी रुद्रं दिषीया (2,33,5)
न हन्यते न जीयते त्वोतो नैनं (3,59,2)
य इन्द्राय सुनवामेत्याह (4,25,4)
न स जीयते मरुतो न हन्यते (5,54,7)
पूषन् तव व्रते वयं न रिष्येम (6,54,9)
ध्रुवासो अस्य कीरयो जनासः (7,100,4)
स्तोतृणां उत भद्रकृत् (8,14,11)
येषामिन्द्रस्ते जयन्ति (8,16,5)
भद्रा इन्द्रस्य रातयः (8,92,1)
यत्कामस्ते जुहुमस्तन्नो अस्तु (10,121,10)

Kātyāyana insists that the devatās are but three in number, in accordance with the three realms: Agni on earth, Vāyu in the midregion and Sūrya in the sky (paribhāshā 8)

तिस्र एव देवताः क्षित्यन्तरिक्षद्युस्थाना ।
अग्निर्वायुः सूर्य इति ॥

Uvaṭa explains the special significance of the expression 'eva' in this aphorism:

एवकारकरणमवधारणार्थम् । ततश्च अन्यासां आस्वेव अन्तर्भावः । तत्र पृथिवीस्थानानां अग्नौ एव अन्तर्भावो द्रष्टव्यः । एवमुत्तरयोर्वर्गयोरिन्द्रे सूर्ये च ॥

He quotes a verse from *Bṛhaddevatā* (1,77):

अग्निभक्ति स्तवान् सर्वानग्नावेव समर्पयेत् ।
यदिन्द्रभक्ति तच्चैन्द्रे सूर्ये सूर्यानुगं च तत् ॥

The aphorism insists that the devatās are only three in number, in accordance with the three realms. All the other devatās in each of the realms must be bracketed in the main devatā of that realm: Agni, Indra or Sūrya.

This is how the mantras addressed to several devatās must be interpreted as directed towards one of these three devatās.

This approach is already familiar to us, as Yāska's (cf. Volume Two). The glossator's comments are somewhat revealing:

क्षियन्ति निवसन्ति अत्र इति क्षितिः पृथिवी । भूमिस्वर्गयोरन्तरा मध्येऽमूर्ततयाऽनुपलम्भात् अन्तरा क्षान्तमित्येवं अन्तरिक्षम् । क्रीडादानादियुक्ता अत्राऽसत इति द्यौः स्वर्गः ॥

He cites a Ṛgvedic verse (10.158.1) in support of the three-devatā position:

सूर्यो नो दिवस्पातु वातोऽन्तरिक्षादग्निर्नः
पार्थिवेभ्यः ॥

The three devatās are symbolized by the three vyāhṛtis (bhūh, bhuvah and svah) taken separately; but, together, the three vyāhṛtis symbolize Prajāpati (9 and 10):

एवं व्याहृतयः प्रोक्ता व्यस्ताः ॥९॥
समस्तानां प्रजापतिः ॥१०॥
(वृत्ति॥ भूरादीनां समस्तानां इति दर्शनाद्देवतेति शेषः॥)

And Prajāpati is represented by the praṇava, 'Om', which symbolizes all gods, the supreme god, the absolute deity and the self in every creature (paribhāshā, II):

ओंकारः सर्वदैवत्यः पारमेष्ठ्यो
वा ब्राह्मो देव आध्यात्मिकः ॥

(वृत्ति॥ ओमिति शब्दः सर्वदेवता स्वभिधायकत्वेन भवः सर्वदेवत्यः। सर्वदेवताभिधायित्वेन सर्वदेवत्यः ॥ ओंकारः परमेष्ठिनं वाऽभिधत्ते। परम उत्कृष्टतमे स्थाने तिष्ठतीति परमेष्ठी। परमेष्ठिनि स्थीयत इति तत्सम्बन्धाभिधाने कर्मणि ष्यञ्॥ ब्रह्मदेवत्योवौंकारः ॥ देवदेवत्यो वौंकारः॥ शरीरवर्ति प्रत्यगात्माभिधानो वौंकारः, प्रत्यगात्मनोऽभिधायकः ॥)

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All the gods (viz. gods like Agni, Vāyu and Sūrya), in whatever realm they be, are but aspects or manifestations of the prowess of this one supreme spirit. But they are named differently on account of the different actions that are ascribed to them. When they are eulogized separately, these distinct manifestations and achievements therein are taken into account (paribhāshā, 12 and 13).

तत्तत्स्थाना अन्यदेवतास्तद्विभूतयः ॥१२॥
(वृत्ति। अन्या देवताः अग्न्यादीनां विभूतयः विकृतयः ॥)

कर्मपृथक्त्वाद्धि पृथगभिधानस्तुतयो भवन्ति ॥१३॥

Uvaṭa's brief comment on this aphorism explains the expression 'vibhūti' as referring to 'yogaiśvarya' which manifests itself in numerous ways.

तासामग्न्यादीनां याः समानस्थानाः प्रथमोत्तम-मध्यवर्गीया इत्यर्थः। तास्तासामेव विभूतयः तिस्र एव योगैश्वर्यादनेकधा भवन्तीत्यर्थः। अथापि स्यादेकैकस्यां किं कृतो भेद इत्यत इदमुच्यते ॥

The last sentence is an introduction to the next aphorism (13), which dispels the doubt how the devatās differ albeit it the 'vibhūti' is one. His comments on this aphorism may also be given here:

कर्मनानात्वाद्धि देवतानानात्वम्। देवता खल्वनेकरूपा सती हव्यकव्यप्रतिग्रहणाय लोकान् जिघृक्षया सम्प्रदानमनु भवन्ती प्रति कर्म भिद्यत इति। यद्वा कर्मपृथक्त्वात् जगद्व्यापार पृथक्त्वादित्यर्थः। शीतोष्णवर्षपवनादिभिः सर्वास्तैस्तैरभिधानैर्योगिकैः स्तूयन्ते। यथा लावकः पाठक इति। एवं तावदौपाधिकं नानात्वमुक्तम् ॥

Diversity of actions is in the very nature of wordly existence; transactions, both natural and

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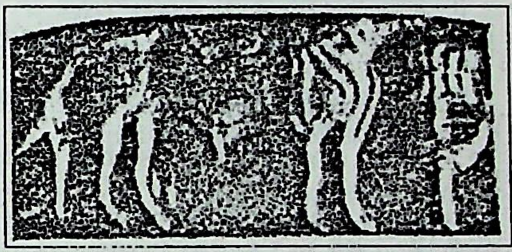
deliberate, are numerous. Seasonal variations, vagaries of natural phenomena, attitudes and temperaments of people are examples. Each of these is ascribed to the working of a devatā. As the actions are different, the names of devatās also are different.

(वृत्ति।। वृत्रवध-समाश्रितरक्षण-वर्षण-दहन-पचन - द्योतनादि व्यापारभेदात् पृथग्नामानः पृथक्स्तुतयो बहुरूपाश्च ता एव तिस्रो देवता भवन्ति ।।
हीति प्रसिद्धौ। अभिधानं नाम गुणावच्छिन्नम्।। गुणसंकीर्तनं स्तुतिः।। स्तुतिः स्तुत्यप्रभावोक्तिः स्तोतृभिस्तु सभक्तिका।।)

The glossator cites verses from *Ṛgveda* to illustrate that the devatās have many names, according to their achievements:

अस्य जानन्तो नाम चिद्वक्तन (1,156,3)
नामानि ते शतक्रतो विश्वाभिर्गीर्भिरीमहे (3,37,3)
न हि नु ते महिमानः समस्य (6.27,3)
इन्द्रो मायाभिः पुरुरूप ईयते (6.47.18)
भुवनस्य पितरं गीर्भिराभिः (6.49.10)
न ते महित्ववनवश्नुवन्ति (7,99,1)
यस्येमे हिमवन्तो महित्वा (10.121,4)
(इत्यादि श्रुतिशतेभ्यः)



The praise or eulogy in the mantra expresses the might and valour of the devatā; and at the same time it emphasizes the devotion and gratitude of the ṛshi who praises or eulogizes. The significant detail in the mantra is the uncanny and superior power (represented by the devatā) being perceived by the ṛshi, whose heart is full of devotion and intuition.

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After explaining that the three devatās (Agni, Vāyu and Sūrya) are the basic aspects of the devatā principle, and that the names and qualities of several devatās mentioned in the mantras are but articulations and manifestations of this triad, Kātyāyana proceeds to poslulate that in reality the devatā is but one, absolutely unitary: it is the great self, the spirit that enlivens everything and sustains all things (paribhāshā 14):

एकैव वा महानात्मा देवता ।

(वृत्ति। एका वा देवता न तिस्रः। तस्या नाम महानात्मा इति चा श्रूयते तस्य नाम महद्यशः (तैत्तिरीयारण्यके १०,१,२, आत्मा वा इदमेक एवाग्र आसीत् (ऐतरेयारण्यके २,४,१)॥

The word 'ātmā' is derived from several roots, all pointing to the outstanding supremacy, universal pervasion, and unsurpassed ability to do all things. The self therefore is 'great' or mighty (mahān). The glossator cites a verse in this connection, the source of which is obscure; the verse also appears to be rather corrupt:

अर्तेरदेरतेर्वाऽपि व्याप्नोते रमते रमेः ।
आङ्दान्माभ्योऽपि बहुधा त्वात्मानं निगदेद् बुधः॥

The derivations are enumerated; the references within brackets are from *Dhātu-pāṭha*. The conclusion is that the word ātman is a totality of all meanings:

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ऋ गतौ (5,14); अद भक्षणे (1,493); अत सातत्यगमने (1,38); आप्लृ व्याप्तौ (5,14); अम गत्यादिषु (1,493) ; रमु क्रीडायाम् (1,906); आङ्‌ युक्तदात्र हुदात्र दाने (3,9); मेङ्‌ प्रणिदाने (1,942); माङ्‌ माने (3,6); मा माने (2,53) । इत्येतेभ्यो धातुभ्यो मनिनादि निर्ब्रूयात् । आत्मशब्दस्तु सर्वधात्वर्थ समवायः ॥

Uvaṭa points out that this is the ultimate, correct and unassailable position ('pāramārthikam ekatvam'). And it is the settled position, as indicated by the expression 'vai'; and the expression 'vā' suggests the rejection of the ritualistic view that there are as many devatās as are addressed to in the mantras ('nānātva-paksham aupachārikam vyāvartayati'). The 'mahān ātmā' that is the one sole and supreme reality is not the phenomenal self subject to the transmigratory rounds, but the most fundamental source of all things and beings, the self of all creatures, the lord of all the worlds; and his special seat of manifestation is the solar orb:

महानात्मेति संसार्यात्मनो व्यावर्तयति । योऽसौ चराचरबीजभूतः सर्वाऽखिललोकनाथः तस्य च विशेषावस्थानं आदित्यमण्डलमित्यर्थः ॥

This one devatā, identified with the self or spirit, is now taken to be Sūrya, who is the self or the conscious principle in all creatures, as it is described by the sage Kutsa in a Ṛgvedic verse (1,115,1) (15-17):

स सूर्य इत्याचक्षते ॥

(वृत्ति। उक्तत्रिकात्मकः सूर्यो यः स एकः
इति वदेविदो वदन्ति।
'एतं ह्येव बह्वृचा महत्युक्थे मीमांसन्ते'
(ऐतरेयारण्यके, ३,२,३) ॥

स हि सर्वभूतात्मा ॥

तदुक्तं ऋषिणा 'सूर्य आत्मा जगतस्तस्थुषश्चेति ॥
(जगतः जङ्गमस्य। तस्थुषः स्थावरस्य। ऋषिणा कुत्सेन)

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The glossator quotes from a purāṇa verse which appears to be. an explanation for the Ṛgvedic mantra cited above:

दिव्यं ज्योतिः सलिलपवनैः पूरयित्वा त्रिलोकीम्
एकीभूतं पुनरपि च तत्सारमादाय गोभिः ।
अन्तर्लीनो विशसि वसुधां तद्गतः स्तूयसेऽन्नम्
तच्च प्राणस्त्वमिति जगतां प्राणभृत्सूर्य आत्मा ॥

Uvaṭa in this context has an interesting observation to make:

द्वयी हि देवतागतिर्विभवावस्था परा च । तत्र पराऽशेषविशेषता शब्दानभिलप्या । विभवावस्था तु अनेकाधिकार रूपानन्त्यात् तेन तेन भेदेनावस्थिता च । या मण्डलविशेषेणावस्थाय संसारयात्रां सम्पादयतीत्यत इदमुक्तं च 'स सूर्य इत्याचक्षत' इति। आह च -

'भवद्भूतभविष्यस्य जङ्गमस्थावरस्य च ।
अस्यैके सूर्यमेवैकं प्रभवं प्रलयं विदुः ॥
असतश्च सतश्चैव योनिरेषा प्रजापतिः ।
यदक्षरं चाव्ययं च यच्चैतद् ब्रह्म शाश्वतम् ॥'

इति वृद्धाचार्या आहुः (बृहद्देवतायां १,६१-६२)॥

There are two modes of divine manifestation: phenomenal (observable) and transcendental. The latter is beyond words, because it transcends all particulars. The former occurs in infinite forms in the transactional world, and the divine power and glory are manifest in various ways. Sūrya dwells in the solar orb and supports the transactions in the world as an eternal witness. The past, present and future are knit in it; the living beings and material things are all made possible by it. It is the source alike for all things that are (present) and that are not (past and future). In fact, Sūrya is the Prajāpati (progenitor and protector of all creatures), eternal, immutable, veritably the Brahman.

किं पुनः कारणम्
यदिन्द्रादीनुत्सृज्य सूर्यमेवाचक्षते ?

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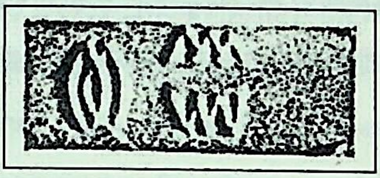

A question is posed: why indeed is Sūrya chosen for this high honour, leaving aside the frequently lauded devatās like India? The answer is: He is indeed the Self of all beings, the causal presence in all embodied and individual selves:

स सूर्यः कारणात्मना क्षेत्रज्ञानां
च स एवावस्थितः इति ॥

Kātyāyana sums up this section on devatās with a statement which reconciles the position that three are the devatās (Agni, Vāyu and Sūrya) in accordance with the realms (earth, mid-region and sky), the position that the devatā is but one, the three being but aspects of the same supreme self (mahān ātmā), and the identification of this one reality with Sūrya. He points out that the devatā of the earth (Agni) and the devatā of the mid-region (Vāyu) are only manifestations of Sūrya in these two realms. The mantra which explicitly affirms that the real is unitary ('ekam sat'), despite different names and descriptions in the praises and prayers of the vedic corpus, is cited in support (paribhāshā, 18 and 19):

तद्विभूतयोऽन्या देवताः ॥
(वृत्ति। देवताकाण्डत्रयवर्तिन्यः सूर्यव्यतिरिक्ता
अग्निवाय्वाद्याः तस्य सूर्यस्य विभूतयः॥ उवटः॥ तस्यैव
मण्डलाधिकारकरणस्थानेकाधिकाररूपेणावस्थिताः॥)

तदप्येतदृचोक्तं 'इन्द्रं मित्रं वरुणमग्निमाहु'रिति ॥

(उवटः॥ सर्वैरेव मन्त्रगतदेवताभिधानैः स एव अभिध्यायत
इत्यर्थः। एवं यतः सम्यग्दर्शनं इत्यस्मादेव दर्शनात् स्वाध्यायादेव

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परमदेवता प्राप्तिर्भवतीति।। ... देवतैकत्वप्रतिपादनेनैवोक्तं दैवतं किमिदानीं अतिसूक्तमुच्यत इति।। यथाभिधानं त्वनुक्रमिष्यामः ।।२,२१।। यद्यस्याभिधानं इन्द्रादि भवेत् तेनैव सूक्तभाजा वा निपातभाजा वा यद्यत्रोपलभ्यत इति।।)

The glossator explains that the expressions 'deva' and 'devatā' employed in the mantras are interchangeable and synonymous.

दानादिसर्वकल्याणगुणयोगी पचाद्यच् देवः। (अष्टाध्यायी, ३,१,१३४) देवात् तलङ्कात् (तत्रैव ५,४,३२) स्वार्थे त्वण् (तत्रैव ५,४,३८) दैवतम्। पुन्नपुंसकः।।

Further, he echoes the views of Yāska that the meaning of the word 'deva' centres round illunination, lighting up; and the upper realms are naturally associated with light. The devatā is by definition luminous; and the mantras illumine the devatā.

द्योतनार्थे दीव्यति धातुनिमित्तो देवशब्दः इत्येतदाम्नायते । 'दिवा वै नोऽभूदिति तद्देवानां देवत्वमिति (तैत्तिरीयब्राह्मणे २,२,९,९)। अतो दीव्यतीति देवः। मन्त्रेण द्योत्यत इत्यर्थः।।

(3)

VEDA-PĀṬHA AND PADA-PĀṬHA

It is well-known that the Vedic corpus has been preserved for several thousands of years only through oral tradition; the student hears the texts recited by his teacher, learns to recite it himself, and teaches his students in due course in the same manner. In this method of communication, great attention was naturally devoted to achieve correctness and clarity in recitation. Words had to be enunciated with absolute precision, and nuances must be unvarying. The branch of

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Vedic learning known as Śikshā not only brought out the recitational value of the Vedic texts but prescribed elaborate rules for correct recitation.

Correct recitation of Vedic texts is described as 'sa-svara', viz. accompanied by the proper enunciation of vowels or tone in recitation (svara). Vowels were given great importance, for they are like the thread which holds together the beads of consonants:

मणिवद्व्यञ्जनान्याहुः सूत्रवत् स्वर उच्यते ।
व्यञ्जनान्यनुवर्तन्ते यत्र तिष्ठन्ति स्वस्वम् ॥

(*Yājñavalkya-śikshā*, 32)

The 'svara' (association of which with ṛk has already been indicated) is so called because they can operate on their own ('svato rājanti' ye varṇās te svarāh'), and do not depend on consonants for their articulation. But the 'vyañjana' (viz. consonants) are incapable of being pronounced unless the vowels help in their expression or manifestation. The consonants are dependent upon vowels in Sanskrit; vowels are therefore all important in language. This explanation is credited to Patañjali:

यः स्वयं राजते तं तु स्वरमाह पतञ्जलिः ।
उपरिस्थायिना तेन व्यङ्ग्यं व्यञ्जनमुच्यते ॥

The explanation for 'sa-svara' is that although words are necessarily composed of consonants, the modulations of vowels are more important ('svara-pradhānam taih svaryam, vyañjanātena sa-svaram', *Yajñavalkya-śikshā,* 31). The involvement of vowels in words normally assumes three variants in

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pitch during articulation of the words: low (nīcha or anudātta), high (uchcha or udātta), and normal (svarita). In respect of time, the vowels may be short (hrasva, duration of one mātrā unit), long (dīrgha, two mātrās) or longer (pluta, three mātrās). We read in *Pāṇinīya-śikshā:*

उदात्तानुदात्तश्च स्वरितश्च स्वरास्त्रयः ।
ह्रस्वो दीर्घः प्लुत इति कालतो नियमा अपि ॥

It may also be noted that Yāska gives the sense of worship for the word 'svara' ('svaryate anayā', svṛ pūjārthe): the devatās are worshipped by it (cf. *Vājasaneyi-samhitā*, 18, 1, 'svaraścha ślokaś cha me'). Svara etymologically signifies that which has excellent progression (ṛ gatau, ir gatau, supirvād arter iyate vā', su araṇah, su īraṇah). The word śvara' is cognate with 'svah' (Pāṇini 8,3,10), 'svar'. (Pāṇini, 2, 4, 7), 'sura' (sur aiśvarye) and 'svarga' (cf. RV, 3, 5, 10).

In Vedic recitation, the modulations of svaras become important. The Ṛgvedic mantras usually have three modulations, udātta, anudāta and svarita, with prachaya, the fourth modulation, also counted sometimes. Anudātta is accentless, not raised; it is called nīcha or low, and is said to be produced below the level of palate ('tālvādishv adhobhāge nishpannah'). Udātta is called high (uccha), lifted up, upraised and accented, produced by the vocal organs above the palate ('pūrvokteshu sthāneshūrdhvabhāge nishpannah'). The 'svarita' is produced by a combination of high and low tones (hence called 'samāhāra', cf. Pāṇini,

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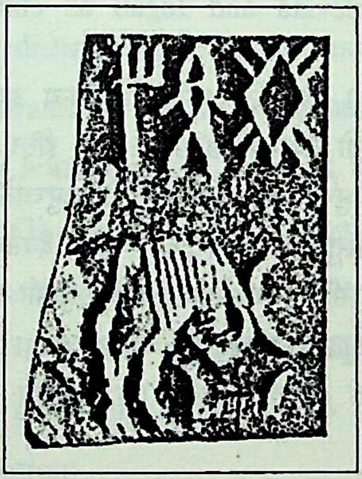
1,2,31), somewhat like the Greek circumflex. ('udāttānudāttayos samāhārah svaritah'). When they are all evenly involved, it is prachaya ('teshām aikye prachayah').

नीचैः स्वरोऽनुदात्तः स्यादुच्चैश्चोऽदात्त उच्यते ।
स्वरितस्तत्समाहारः तदैक्यं प्रचयः स्मृतः ॥



Keśava's *Lakshaṇa-grantha* refers to musical notes and relates them to the three vedic svaras. According to this text, the notes Nishāda and Gāndharā (Ni, Ga) are udātta in tonal value, Ṛshabha and Dhaivata (Ri, Dha) are anudātta; and shaḍja, madhyama and pañchama (Sa, Ma and Pa) are svarita:

गान्धर्ववेदे ये प्रोक्ताः सप्त षड्जर्षभादयः ।
त एव वेदे विज्ञेयास्त्रय उच्चादयः स्वराः ॥
उच्चौ निषादगान्धारौ नीचौ ऋषभधैवतौ ।
शेषास्तु स्वरिता ज्ञेयाः षड्जमध्यमपञ्चमाः ॥

Pāṇinīya-śīkshā also has this verse:

उदात्ते निषादगान्धारावनुदात्त ऋषभधैवतौ ।
स्वरितप्रभवा ह्येते षड्जमध्यम पञ्चमाः ॥

There is also a tradition regarding how the Vedic tones are produced. *Śaunakīya-śīkshā* (55) says that the anudātta (low) tone is produced from the heart, the udātta (high) from the head, more specifically around the eyebrows (according to Yajñavalkya-śikshā, 'udāttam tu

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bhuvah prānte', the svarita from the temples above the ears, and the prachaya from all the organs associated with production of voice (according to Yajñavalkya, from the tip of the nose 'prachayam nāsikāgratah'):

अनुदात्तो हृदि ज्ञेयो मूर्ध्न्युदात्त उदाहृतः ।
स्वरितः कर्णमूलीयः सर्वस्मिन्प्रचयः स्मृतिः ॥

The custom of indicating the svaras by the movement of the right hand while reciting the mantras ('svarochchāraṇa-kāle hasta-prakshepah') also attends to these origins of the tones.

There are other details given in texts Sarva-sammata-śikshā, *Varṇochchāraṇa-dīpikā* and *Śaunakīya-śīkshā*, such as the castes, colours, devatā and chhandas of the Vedic tones. Udātta is said to belong to the brāhmaṇa caste, white in complexion, has Agni as devatā and Gāyatri as chhandas. Anudātta is Kshatriya in caste, red in complexion, having Soma as devatā and Trishṭup as chhandas. Svarita is vaiśya in caste, dark in colour, having Savitṛ (Sūrya) as devatā and Jagatī as chhandas.

उदात्तो ब्रह्मजातिः स्यान्नीचो राजन्य उच्यते ।
स्वरितो वैश्यजातिश्च प्रचयः शूद्र ईरितः ॥
शुक्लमुच्चं विजानीयान्नीचं लोहितमुच्यते ।
श्यामस्तु स्वरितं विद्यादग्निरुच्चस्य दैवतम् ॥
नीचे सोमं विजानीयात्प्रचरिते सविता तथा ॥
विद्यादुदात्तं गायत्रं नीचं त्रैष्टुभमुच्यते ।
जागतं स्वरितं विद्यादेक एव नियोगतः ॥

In *Yājñavalkya-śikshā*, it is said that the Vedic tones are primarily two: udātta and anudātta; they are distinct from each other. The svarita is but a modification of udātta, and prachaya is a variation of svarita:

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स्वरौ चैवात्र दृश्येते भिन्नोदात्तानुदात्तकौ ।
उदात्तान्निहितः स्वारः स्वरितात् प्रचयो भवेत् ॥

Normally, Vedic recitation involves three tonal levels: udātta, anudātta and svarita. (1) When the letter is pronounced normally without any modulations, it is udātta, and the letter as it is written will have no mark distinguishing it; (2) anudātta is indicated by a short horizontal line at the bottom of the letter; it is low tone; (3) the svarita is distinguished by a short vertical line above the letter. The first ṛk of Ṛgveda with these marks are given below as an illustration:

अ॒ग्निमी॑ळे पु॒रोहि॑तम्
य॒ज्ञस्य॑ दे॒वमृ॒त्विज॑म् ।
होता॑रं रत्न॒धात॑मम् ॥

(उदात्तः ग्नि । रो । ज्ञ । व । त्वि । हो । धा ।
अनुदात्तः अ । पु । य । दे । मृ । त्न ।
स्वरितः मी । हि । स्य । जम् । ता । त ।
And ळे । तम् । रम् । र । मम् ।
are called prachaya tones)

Another device, not only to preserve and perpetuate the correct recitation of the Vedic mantras but to preserve the correct text, was to separate out the words of the mantra and provide fixity for them. Known as pada-pāṭha, this was also an early attempt, going back to the days of Śākalya (Devamitra-Śākalya, also known as Vidagdha-Śākalya or Sthavira-Śākalya), not later than 3000 B.C. The question of the antiquity of pada-pāṭha as against that of samhitāpāṭha has already been referred to (cf. Volume One,). The samhitā form of the mantra has the chhandas to govern the arrangement of words;

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and the words here are joined up closely ('paras-samnikarshas samhitā'). But pada-pāṭha would break up the samhita into its constituent words; and the words are given separately, and with their individual grammatical identites. This arrangement would not only help the recitation but also the understanding of the mantra. Each word in the ṛk is here given so as to facilitate the identification of the prakṛti, the pratyaya, the sandhi, the samāsa and other details of individual words. Hence the definition given in Kātyāyana's *Prātiśakhya-sūtra:*

पदच्छेदोऽसंहितः ॥

This device is there only for the Vedic texts like *Ṛk-samhitā*; and not for Brāhmaṇa or Āraṇyaka-texts. And the study of *Ṛgveda* would necessarily involve perfect acquaintance with the pada-pāṭha of the mantras. And pada-pāṭha is not a mechanical device either, for the pada-pāṭha varies with the śākhās, and needs to be altered when the meaning of the mantra varies; the tonal values of the letters (udātta, anudātta and svarita) in the individual words also get altered.

It is conjectured that the *Ṛk-samhitā* had several pada-pāṭhas; but what has held the field till our own day is the pada-pāṭha provided by the sage Śākalya to all the mantras in *Ṛksamhitā* except for the mantras included in Vālakhilya-sūktas in the eight maṇḍala. Another pada-pāṭha referred to by later writers on the Vedic lore was by Rāvaṇa, about whom nothing has been known.

It has been said that only the student who knows perfectly well the

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circumstances leading to the order of words, the conditions governing the sequence of letters, and the distinctions between the tonal values of letters in recitation can dare to enter the assembly of Vedic scholars. These are indispensable for acquiring mastery over the Vedic corpus, and to understand the precise meaning of the Vedas. We read in *Sarva-sammata-śikshā* of Lakshmaṇa:

पदक्रमविशेषज्ञो वर्णक्रमविचक्षणः ।
स्वरमात्राविभागज्ञः गच्छेदाचार्यसंसदम् ॥

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CHAPTER TWO

INTRODUCTION TO MAṆḌALA I

The Sarvānukramaṇī describes the first book of the Ṛgvedic corpus as 'śatarchinām prathamam maṇḍalam', and gives its size as extending to one thousand and seventeen sūktas. Here is the introduction that Shaḍguru-śishya provides:

अग्निमीळ इत्यादि खिलरहित
सप्तदशाधिक सूक्तसहस्रस्य
प्रतिसूक्तमाद्यसूक्तप्रतिज्ञानं ऋष्यादिकं
दर्शयितुमुपक्रमते ।
यत्र च सूत्रेष्वनुक्तं परिभाषातो गृहीतव्यम् ॥

अत्र शास्त्रे नवार्था ज्ञातव्याः - (१) सूक्तादिः, (२) सूक्तेष्वृक्संख्या, (३) छन्दः, (४) पादः, (५) अक्षराणि, (६) दैवतं, (७) ऋषेर्नाम, (८) गोत्रं च, (९) कचित्कथा चेति ॥

As already indicated, the first maṇḍala has 1,017 sūktas if we exclude the Vālakhilya-sūktas; the number would be 1,028 if we include these sūktas (in maṇḍala 8). The *Anukramaṇī* prefers to exclude them. We also read in *Anuvākāṇukramaṇī* (39):

सहस्रमेतत्सूक्तानां निश्चितं खैलिकैर्विना ।
दश सप्त च पठ्यन्ते संख्यातं वै पदक्रमम् ॥

Each of the Sūktas has nine points to be considered : (1) how the sūkta commences; (2) the number of ṛks in the sūkta; (3) the chhandas or metrical forms available in the sūkta; (4) the number of lines; (5) the number

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of letters constituting the sūkta; (6) the devatā addressed in the sūkta; (7) the name of the ṛshi who is responsible for the sūkta; (8) the family or lineage to which the ṛshi belongs; and (9) the background story or legend, which is occasionally referred to.

While the anukramaṇīs have to deal with all these details, the study or recitation attends to but three of them: ṛshi, devatā and chhandas. It is usual in a maṇḍala for the hymns associated with a particular ṛshi to begin with an address to the devatā, Agni, followed by praises to Indra; and only then, other devatās may find a mention. And the sūktas in the metrical form known as 'gāyātri' are to be found first, then the sūktas in trishṭup, jagati etc. It is also seen that short sūktas (with three to six mantras) usually precede longer ones; this, however, is not a rule. In a sūkta, while it is common to find a single ṛshi as its seer, there are sūktas where more than one ṛshi figure in the preliminary acknowledgement. The same is true of the devatās and the chhandas.

It may also be mentioned that the names of the ṛshis are not always their real names. A ṛshi may abandon his earlier name and assume a new one, in keeping with his vision or with the circumstances relevant to this vision. For instance, the earlier name of the sage Viśvāmitra was Viśva-ratha. He called himself Viśvāmitra when the vision dawned on him. *Aitareya-āraṇyaka* suggests that the expression Viśvāmitra actually

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refers to the vital principle (prāṇa), which should be friendly to all creatures. In the same way, *Śatapatha-brāhmaṇa* explains that the name of the sage Vaśishṭha (closely associated with Viśvāmitra) refers to the sense-faculties (indriya). We have a hymn in Ṛgveda (10,151) called 'Śraddhāsūkta'. The ṛshi of this sūkta is known as Śraddhā-Kāmāyanī. This was obviously not her real name; she called herself so when divine fervour and faith filled her. We read in *Bhṛgu-smṛti* that the seers assumed names, inspired by the keywords contained in the mantras they visualized

सर्वेषां तु नामानि कर्माणि च पृथक् पृथक् ।
वेदशब्देभ्य एवादौ पृथक्संस्थाश्च निर्ममे ॥

In fact, the seer is not different from his vision. It is in this sense that the seer is identified with the veda: 'ṛshir vedah' (Pāṇini, 1, 1, 18 cf. Haradatta's *Padamañjarī* on it; cf. also *Nirukta,* 10, 10). It is not strange either that the seer will fall in love with his vision, and identifies himself with the vision and with the hymn that articulates or embodies this vision ('ṛsher dṛshṭārthasya prītir bhavatyākhyāna-samyuktā'). A seer naturally focusses all of his attention on the hymn; and nothing other than the hymn exists for him. When the seers are described as visualizing the hymns ('ṛshīṇām mantra-drshṭayah'), the meaning is that their vision is confined to the hymn ('mantre dṛshṭayah')

Regarding the first sūkta, the *Anukramaṇī* says (1):

अग्निं नव मधुच्छन्दा वैश्वामित्रः ॥

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The first word agni refers to the beginning of the sūkta (sūktādi); the first ṛk in the sūkta begins with 'agnim īḷe'. The word 'nava' (nine) refers to the number of stanzas (ṛks) in this hymn (sūkta) ('naveti sūktasya ṛk-samkhyā'): Madhuchchhandas is the name of the seer of this hymn (iti ṛsher nāma); and 'vaiśvāmitra' (son of Visvāmitra) refers to his lineage ('iti tasya gotram'):

विश्वामित्रपुत्रो मधुच्छन्दो नामकस्तस्य
द्रष्टृत्वात् तदीय ऋषिः ॥

The devatā of the sūkta is Agni; as it is said so in the *Anukramaṇikā:*

अस्मिन् सूक्ते स्तूयमानत्वात् अग्निर्देवः ।
तथा चानुक्रमणिकायामुक्तम् ।

Also because, at the beginning of every maṇḍala Agni is the devatā that is eulogized, and then Indra, followed by other devatās (ibid, 12, 12):

मण्डलादिषु आग्नेयमैन्द्रात् ॥

As regards the chhandas of the first sūkta, it is gāyatri, for it is with this chhandas that the samhitā collection must start. In fact, this metrical form is very pristine and was prevalent even before the first of sages, Hiraṇya-stūpa, who belonged to the Aṅgiras family (āṅgiraso 'yam gotratah, anukta-gotratvād'). We read in Kātyāyana's *Sarvānukramaṇī* (14):

आदौ गायत्रं प्राग्घिरण्यस्तूपीयात्
इति गायत्री छन्दः ॥

(वृत्ति॥ संहितादौ 'त्वमग्ने द्युभिस्त्वमाशुशुक्षणि' इति हिरण्यस्तूप संशब्दनात् प्राक्छन्दो गायत्रीति विद्यात् ॥

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The citation is from second Kaṇḍikā, 12 'त्वमग्ने द्य्वूना हिरण्यस्तूप आग्नेयं त्रिष्टुबन्त्याष्टमी षोळश्यौ च ॥'

The glossator further explains this chhandas as consisting of three pādas, each of which has eight letters ('tripadā gāyatri padāś cha ashṭākshārah'). He quotes two authorities to support the view that a chhandas is so called because it conceals a person in order to eliminate the sins from him ('purushasya pāpa-sambandham vārayitum achchhāda-katvāt chhanda ity uchyata')

(1) TAITTIRĪYA-SAMHITĀ

प्रजापतिरग्निरचिनुत । स क्षुरपविर्भूत्वाऽतिष्ठत् । तं देवा बिभ्यतो नोपायन्ते । छन्दोभिरात्मानं छादयित्वोपायन् । तच्छन्दसां छन्दस्त्वम् ।

(Prajāpati conducted a fire-ritual and was blazing like a fierce flame. The gods were scared to approach him. They then covered (concealed) themselves with the chhandas, and were able to go near him)

(2) CHHANDOGYA-UPANISHAD, 1,4,2

देवा वै मृत्योर्बिभ्यतस्त्रयीं विद्यां प्राविशंस्ते छन्दोभिरात्मानमाच्छादयदययन्यदेभिराच्छादयंस्तच्छन्दसां छन्दस्त्वम् ॥

(The gods were scared of Death, and they entered with three scriptures, viz. the three Vedas, covering or concealing themselves with chhandas. The chhandas protected them).

Uvaṭa's bhāshya on *Sarvānukraṇaṇī* gives this preface :

अग्निमिति सूक्तप्रतीकम् । 'अग्निमीळे पुरोहितम्' । नवेत्यृक्संख्या। नवर्चमिदं सूक्तम् । मधुच्छन्दा ऋषिरपश्यत् विश्वामित्रपुत्रः । मण्डलादिष्वाग्नेयं

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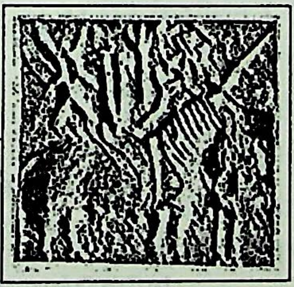
अनादेशे सति इत्याग्नेयम् । आद़ौ गायत्रं प्रग्घिरण्यस्तूपीयात् । अनादेशे एव तु गायत्रम् । न तु विश्वामित्रग्रहणमनर्थकम् । मधुच्छन्दसैवार्षज्ञानसिद्धेः। ननु अन्वय ज्ञानस्यार्थस्येदं हेतुत्वात् । तदुक्तम् -

'ऋषीणामार्षगोत्राणां ज्ञानमायुष्यमुच्यते ।
पुत्रीयं च यशस्यं च धनधान्यममित्रहम् ॥'

इति शौनकाचार्येणोक्तत्वादिति । इन्द्रं विश्वा इत्यसदर्वाक् सर्वं माधुच्छन्दसं ज्ञेयम् । दश चैतानि सूक्तानि ॥

He clarifies that Madhuchchhandā-Vaiśvāmitra is the seer for the first ten sūktas in the first maṇḍala; and that gāyatrī is the chhandas associated with the first thirty sūktas (prior to the hymn envisioned by the sage Hiraṇya-stūpa).

The table given below gives the three details mentioned above (ṛshi, devatā and chhandas) for the sūktas in the first Maṇḍala of the *Ṛgveda-samhitā*; also given is the number of ṛks (mantras) in each of the 191 sūktas, the total number of ṛks in this maṇḍala being 2,006.



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DETAILS OF MAṆḌALA I

Sūkta	No. of mantras	Ṛshi	Devatā (for mantras)	Chhandas
	(Ashṭaka 1, Adhyāya 1)			
1	(9)	Madhucchhanda-(vaiśvāmitra)	Agni (1 to 9)	Gāyatri
2	(9)	"	Vāyu (1 to 3)	Gāyatri
			Indra-Vāyu (4 to 6)	
			Mitrā-Varuṇa (7 to 9)	
3	(12)	"	Aśvinau (1 to 3)	Gāyatri
			Indra (4 to 6)	
			Viśve-deva (7 to 9)	
			Sarasvatī (10 to 12)	
4	(10)	"	Indra (1 to 10)	Gāyatri
5	(10)	"	Indra (1 to 10)	Gāyatri
6	(10)	"	Indra (1 to 3)	Gāyatri
			The Maruts (4)	
			Indra-Maruts (5)	
			The Maruts (6)	
			Indra-Maruts (7)	
			The Maruts (8 to 9)	
			Indra (10)	

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Sūkta	No. of mantras	Ṛshi	Devatā (for mantras)	Chhandas
7	(10)	,,	Indra (1 to 10)	Gāyatri
8	(10)	,,	Indra (1 to 10)	Gāyatri
9	(10)	,,	Indra (1 to 10)	Gāyatri
10	(12)	,,	Indra (1 to 12)	Anushṭup
11	(8)	Jetā (mādhuchchandasa)	Indra (1 to 8)	Anushṭup
12	(12)	Medhātithi (Kāṇva)	Agni (1 to 5) Nirmathyāvahanī - yāgnī (6) Agni (7 to 12)	Gāyatri
13	(13)	,,	Samiddhogni or Idhma (1) Tanūnapāt (2) Narāśaṁsa (3) Iḷa (4) Barhi (5) Devīdvāra (6) Ushāsānaktā (7) Daivyau-hotārau Prāchetasau (8) Sarasvati-Iḷā Bhārati (9) Tvashtā (10) Vanaspati (11) Svāhākrtayah (12)	Gāyatri

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Sūkta	No. of mantras	Ṛshi	Devatā (for mantras)	Chhandas
14	(12)	,,	Viśve-deva (1 to 12) (Viśvair devaih sahitognih)	Gāyatri
15	(12)	,,	Indra (1) The Maruts (2) Tvashṭā (3) Agni (4) Indra (5) Mitrā-Varuṇa (6) Draviṇodā-agni (7 to 10) Aśvinau (11) Agni (12)	Gāyatri
16	(9)	,,	Indra (1 to 9)	Gāyatri
17	(9)	,,	Indra-Varuṇa (1 to 9)	Gāyatri
18	(9)	,,	Brahmaṇaspati (1 to 3) Indra-Brāhmaṇaspati- Soma (4) Brāhmaṇaspati - Soma-Indrādakshiṇāh (5) Sadasaspati (6 to 8) Narāśaṁsa (9)	Gāyatri
19	(9)	,,	Agnā-marutah (1 to 9)	Gāyatri

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Sūkta	No. of mantras	Ṛshi	Devatā (for mantras)	Chhandas
	(Ashṭaka 1, Adhyāya 2)			
20	(8)	,,	The Ṛbhus (1 to 8)	Gāyatri
21	(6)	,,	Indra-Agni (1 to 6)	Gāyatri
22	(21)	,,	Aśvinau (1 to 4)	Gāyatri
			Savitā (5 to 8)	
			Agni (9 to 10)	
			Devyah (11)	
			Indrāṇī Varuṇānī	
			Āgnāyyī (12)	
			Dyāvā-Prthivyau (13 to 14)	
			Prthivī (15)	
			Vishṇu (16 to 21)	
23	(24)	,,	Vāyu (1)	Gāyatri
			Indravāyu (2 to 3)	(1 to 18);
			Mitrā-Varuṇam (4 to 6)	Pura-
			Marutah (7 to 9)	ushṇik(19);
			(or Marutvān Indra)	Pratishṭhā
			Viśve-devāh (10 to 12)	(21);
			Pūshā (13 to 15)	Anushṭup
			Āpah (16 to 22)	(20,22-24)
			Agnyāpah (23)	
			Agni (24)	

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Sūkta	No. of mantras	Ṛshi	Devatā (for mantras)	Chhandas
24	(15)	Śunah-śepa - (ājīgarti)	Kah (1) Agni (2) Savitā (3 to 5) Varuṇa (6 to 15)	Trishṭup (1,2,6-15); Gāyatri (3-5)
25	(21)	,,	Varuṇa (1 to 21)	Gāyatri
26	(10)	,,	Agni (1 to 10)	Gāyatri
27	(13)	,,	Agni (1 to 12) Devāh (13)	Gāyatri (1-12); Trishṭup (13)
28	(9)	,,	Indra (1 to 4) Ulūkhala (5 to 6) Ulūkhala-Musala (7 to 8) Prajāpatir-Hariśchandrah (9)	Anushṭup (1-6); Gāyatri (7-9)
29	(7)	,,	Indra (1 to 7)	Paṅkti
30	(22)	,,	Indra (1-16) Aśvinau (17 to 19) Ushasah (20 to 22)	Gāyatri (1-10, 12-15,17-22); Pādanichṛt-gāyatri

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Sūkta	No. of mantras	Ṛshi	Devatā (for mantras)	Chhandas
				(11); trishṭup (16)
31	(18)	Hiraṇya-stūpa-(āṅgirasah)	Agni (1 to 18)	Jagatī (8) Trishṭup (16,18)
32	(15)	,,	Indra (1 to 15)	Trishṭup
	(Ashṭaka 1, Adhyāya 3)			
33	(15)	,,	Indra (1 to 15)	Trishṭup
34	(12)	,,	Aśvinau (1 to 12)	Jagatī; Trishṭup (9,12)
35	(11)	,,	Agni-Mitra-Varuṇa-Rātrī-Savitarah (1) Savitā (2 to 11)	Trishṭup; Jagatī (1,9)
36	(20)	Kaṇva (ghaura)	Agni (1 to 12) Yūpa (13 to 14) Agni (15 to 20)	Pragātha
37	(15)	,,	The Maruts (1 to 15)	Gāyatri
38	(15)	,,	The Maruts (1 to 15)	Gāyatri

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Sūkta	No. of mantras	Ṛshi	Devatā (for mantras)	Chhandas
39	(10)	,,	The Maruts (1to10)	Pragātha
40	(8)	,,	Brahmaṇaspati (1to8)	Pragātha
41	(9)	,,	Varuṇa-mitra- Āryama (1 to 3) The Ādityas (4 to 6) Varuṇa-Mitra- Āryama (7 to 9)	Gāyatri
42	(10)	,,	Pūshā (1 to 10)	Gāyatri
43	(9)	,,	Rudra (1 to 2) Rudra-Mitra-varuṇa (3) Rudra (4 to 6) Soma (7 to 9)	Gāyatri; Anushṭup (9)
44	(14)	Praskaṇva (kāṇva)	Agni - Aśva- Ushas (1 to 2) Agni (3 to 14)	Pragātha
45	(10)	,,	Agni (1 to 9) Agni-devāh (10)	Anushṭup
46	(15)	,,	Aśvinau (1 to 15)	Gāyatri
	(Ashṭaka 1, Adhyāya 4)			
47	(10)	,,	Aśvinau (1 to 10)	Pragātha
48	(16)	,,	Ushas (1 to 16)	Pragātha

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Sūkta	No. of mantras	Ṛshi	Devatā (for mantras)	Chhandas
49	(4)	,,	Ushas (1 to 4)	Anushṭup
50	(13)	,,	Sūrya (1 to 13)	Anushṭup
51	(15)	Savya (āṅgirasa)	Indra (1 to 15)	Jagatī; Trishṭup (14, 15)
52	(15)	,,	Indra (1 to 15)	Jagatī; Trishṭup (13, 15)
53	(11)	,,	Indra (1 to 11)	Jagatī; Trishṭup (10, 11)
54	(11)	,,	Indra (1 to 11)	Jagatī; Trishṭup (6,8,9.11)
55	(8)	,,	Indra (1 to 8)	Jagatī
56	(6)	,,	Indra (1 to 6)	Jagatī
57	(6)	,,	Indra (1 to 6)	Jagatī
58	(9)	Nodhā (gautama)	Agni (1 to 9)	Jagatī; Trishṭup (6-9)
59	(7)	,,	Vaiśvānara-agni (1to7)	Trishṭup

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Sūkta	No. of mantras	Ṛshi	Devatā (for mantras)	Chhandas
60	(5)	,,	Agni (1 to 5)	Trishṭup
61	(16)	,,	Indra (1 to 16)	Trishṭup
62	(13)	,,	Indra (1 to 13)	Trishṭup
63	(9)	,,	Indra (1 to 9)	Trishṭup
64	(15)	,,	The Maruts (1 to 15)	Jagatī; Trishṭup (15)
65	(10)	Parāśara (śākalya)	Agni (1 to 10)	Dvipadā-virāṭ
66	(10)	,,	Agni (1 to 10)	Dvipadā-virāṭ
67	(10)	,,	Agni (1 to 10)	Dvipadā-virāṭ
68	(10)	,,	Agni (1 to 10)	Dvipadā-virāṭ
69	(10)	,,	Agni (1 to 10)	Dvipadā-virāṭ
70	(11)	,,	Agni (1 to 11)	Dvipadā-vrāṭ
71	(10)	,,	Agni (1 to 10)	Trishṭup
72	(10)	,,	Agni (1 to 10)	Trishṭup

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Sūkta	No. of mantras	Ṛshi	Devatā (for mantras)	Chhandas
73	(10)	,,	Agni (1 to 10)	Trishṭup
74	(9)	Gotama (rāhūgaṇa)	Agni (1 to 9)	Gāyatri
75	(5)	,,	Agni (1 to 5)	Gāyatri
76	(5)	,,	Agni (1 to 5)	Trishṭup
77	(5)	,,	Agni (1 to 5)	Trishṭup
78	(5)	,,	Agni (1 to 5)	Gāyatri
79	(12)	,,	Agni (1 to 12) (or Madhyamogni)	Trishṭup (1-3); Ushṇik (4-6); Gāyatri (7-12)
80	(16)	,,	Indra (1 to 16) (or Atharvā-Manu-dadhyaṅg)	Paṅkti
	(Ashṭaka1, Adhyāya 6)			
81	9	,,	Indra (1 to 9)	Paṅkti
82	6	,,	Indra (1 to 6)	Paṅkti, Jagatī (6)
83	6	,,	Indra (1 to 6)	Jagatī

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Sūkta	No. of mantras	Ṛshi	Devatā (for mantras)	Chhandas
84	(20)	,,	Indra (1 to 20)	Anushṭup (1-6); Ushṇik (7-9); Paṅkti (10-12); Gāyatri (13-15); Trishṭup (16-18); Bṛhati (19); Satobṛhatī (20)
85	(12)	,,	The Maruts (1 to 20)	Jagati; Trishṭup (5,12)
86	(10)	,,	The Maruts (1 to 10)	Gāyatri
87	(6)	,,	The Maruts (1 to 6)	Jagatī
88	(6)	,,	The Maruts (1 to 6)	Trishṭup; Prastāra-paṅkti(1,6) Virāḍ-rūpā (5)

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Sūkta	No. of mantras	Ṛshi	Devatā (for mantras)	Chhandas
89	(10)	,,	Viśve-devāh (1 to 10)	Jagatī; Virāṭ - sthānā (6); Trishṭup (8, 10)
90	(9)	,,	Viśve-devāh (1 to 9)	Gāyatri; Anushṭup (9)
91	(23)	Gotama (rāhūgana)	Soma (1 to 23)	Trishṭup; Gāyatri (5-16); Ushṇik (17)
92	(18)	,,	Ushas (1 to 15)	Jagatī(1-4); Trishṭup (5-12); Ushṇik (13-18)
93	(12)	,,	Aśvinau (16 to 18) Agni-Soma (1 to 12)	Anushṭup (1-3); Trishṭup (4-7, 12); Jagatī (8); Gāyatri (9-11)

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Sūkta	No. of mantras	Ṛshi	Devatā (for mantras)	Chhandas
94	(16)	Kutsa (āngirasa)	Agni (1 to 7) Devāgni (8) Agni (9to 15) Agni-Mitra-Varuṇa-Aditi-Sindhu-Prthivī-Dyauh (16)	Jagatī; Trishṭup (15, 16)
		(Ashṭaka 1, Adhyāya 7)		
95	(11)	Kutsa (āngirasa)	Ushas-agni (1 to 11)	Trishṭup
96	(9)	,,	Draviṇodā-agni (1 to 9)	Trishṭup
97	(8)	,,	Śuchir-agni (1 to 8)	Gāyatri
98	(3)	,,	Vaiśvanara-agni (1 to 8)	Trishṭup
99	(1)	Kaśyapa (mārīcha)	Jātavedā - agni (1)	Trishṭup
100	(19)	Ṛjāśva-Aṁbarīsha Sahadeva-Bhayamāna-Surādhas-Vārshāgira	Indra (1 to 19)	Trishṭup
101	(11)	Kutsa (āngirasa)	Indra (1 to 11)	Jagatī; Trishṭup (8-11)

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Sūkta	No. of mantras	Ṛshi	Devatā (for mantras)	Chhandas
102	(11)	,,	Indra (1 to 11)	Jagatī; Trishṭup (11)
103	(8)	,,	Indra (1 to 8)	Trishṭup
104	(9)	,,	Indra (1 to 9)	Trishṭup
105	(19)	Trita - āpya or Kutsa (āṅgirasa)	Viśve-devāh (1 to 19)	Paṅkti; yava-madhyā (8); Trishṭup (19)
106	(7)	Kutsa-āngirasa	Viśve-devāh (1 to 19)	Jagatī; Triśhṭup (7)
107	(3)	,,	Viśve-devās (1 to 3)	Trishṭup (7)
108	(13)	,,	Indra-Agni (1 to 13)	Trishṭup
109	(8)	,,	Indra-Agni (1 to 8)	Trishṭup
110	(9)	,,	The Ṛbhus (1 to 9)	Jagatī; Trishṭup (5,9)

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Sūkta	No. of mantras	Ṛshi	Devatā (for mantras)	Chhandas
111	(5)	,,	The Ṛbhus (1 to 5)	Jagatī; Trishṭup (5)
112	(25)	,,	Dyāvā-pṛthivī Agni- Aśvinau (1) Aśvinau (2 to 25)	Jagatī; Trishṭup (24, 25)
	(Ashṭaka 1, Adhyāya 8)			
113	(20)	,,	Ushas - Rātri (1)	Trishṭup
114	(11)	,,	Ushas (2 to 20)	Jagatī; Trishṭup (10-11)
115	(6)	,,	Sūrya (1 to 6)	Trishṭup
116	(25)	Kakshīvān (auśijo dairghatamasah)	Aśvinau (1 to 25)	Trishṭup
117	(25)	,,	Aśvinau (1 to 25)	Trishṭup
118	(11)	,,	Aśvinau (1 to 11)	Trishṭup
119	(10)	,,	Aśvinau (1 to 10)	Jagatī
120	(12)	,,	Aśvinau (1 to 12)	Gāyatrī (1) Kakup (2); Kāvirāṭ(3);

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Sūkta	No. of mantras	Ṛshi	Devatā (for mantras)	Chhandas
				Nashṭa-rūpī (4); Tanu-śirā (5); Ushṇik (6); Vishṭāra-bṛhatī (7); Kṛti (8); Virāṭ (9) Gāyatri (10-12)
121	(15)	”	Indra (1 to 15)	Trishṭup
	(Ashṭaka 2, Adhyāya 1)			
122	(15)	”	Viśve-devāh (1 to 15)	Trishṭup; Virāḍ-rūpā (5-6)
123	(13)	”	Ushas (1 to 13)	Trishṭup
124	(13)	”	Ushas (1 to 13)	Trishṭup
125	(7)	”	Svanayah (1 to 7)	Trishṭup; Jagatī (4-5)
126	(1-5)	”	Bhāvayarya (1 to 5)	Trshṭup;

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Sūkta	No. of mantras	Ṛshi	Devatā (for mantras)	Chhandas
		(6) Bhāvayavya (7) Romaśā - brahmavādinī	Romaśā (6) Bhāvavavya (7)	Anushṭup (6-7)
127	(11)	Paruchchhepa (daivodāsi)	Agni (1 to 11)	Atyashṭi; Ati-dhṛti(6)
128	(8)	,,	Agni (1 to 8)	Atyashṭi
129	(11)	,,	Indra (1 to 5) Indu (6) Indra (7 to 11)	Atyashṭi; Ati-śakvari (8-9); Ashṭi (11)
130	(10)	,,	Indra (1 to 10)	Atyashṭi; Trishṭup (10)
131	(7)	,,	Indra (1 to 7)	Atyashṭi
132	(6)	,,	Indra (1 to 5) Indra-parvatendra (6)	Atyashṭi
133	(7)	,,	Indra (1 to 7)	Trishṭup(1) Anushṭup (2-4); Gāyatri(5); Dhṛti (6) Ashṭi (7)

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Sūkta	No. of mantras	Ṛshi	Devatā (for mantras)	Chhandas
134	(6)	,,	Vāyu (1 to 6)	Atyashṭi; Ashṭi (6)
135	(9)	,,	Indra (1 to 3) Indra-Vāyu (4 to 8) Vāyu (9)	Atyashṭi; Ashṭi (7-8)
136	(7)	,,	Mitra-Varuṇa (1 to 5) Sūrya-Rodasī - Mitra - Varuṇa - Rudra - Indra - Agni - Aryamā - Bhaga - Soma (6) Deva - Marut - Agni- Mitra - Varuṇa - Maghavān (7)	Atyashṭi; Trishṭup (7)
	(Ashṭaka 2, Adhyāya 2)			
137	(3)	,,	Mitra - Varuṇa (1 to 3)	Ati-śakvarī
138	(4)	,,	Pūshan (1 to 4)	Atyashṭi
139	(11)	,,	Viśve-devāh (1) Mitra - Varuṇa (2) Aśvinau (3 to 5) Indra (6) Agni (7) The Maruts (8)	Atyashṭi; Bṛhatī (5); Trishṭup (11)

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Sūkta	No. of mantras	Ṛshi	Devatā (for mantras)	Chhandas
			Indra - Agni (9) Bṛhaspati (10) Viśve-devāh (11)	
140	(13)	Dīrghatamas (auchathya)	Agni (1 to 13)	Jagati; Trishṭup (10)
141	(13)	”	Agni (1 to 13)	Jagatī; Trishṭup (12-13)
142	(13)	”	Samiddhogni (1) Tanūnapāt (2) Narāśaṁsa (3) Iḷa (4) Barhi (5) Devīrdvāra (6) Ushāsānaktā (7) Devyau hotārau Prāchetasau (8) Sarasvatī - Iḷā - Bhāṛati (9) Tvashṭā (10) Vanaspati (11) Svāhākṛtayah (12) Indra (13)	Anushṭup

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Sūkta	No. of mantras	Ṛshi	Devatā (for mantras)	Chhandas
143	(8)	,,	Agni (1 to 8)	Jagatī; Trishṭup(8)
144	(7)	,,	Agni (1 to 7)	Jagatī
145	(5)	,,	Agni (1 to 5)	Jagatī; Trishṭup(5)
146	(5)	,,	Agni (1 to 5)	Trishṭup
147	(5)	,,	Agni (1 to 5)	Trishṭup
148	(5)	,,	Agni (1 to 5)	Trishṭup
149	(5)	,,	Agni (1 to 5)	Virāṭ
150	(3)	,,	Agni (1 to 3)	Ushṇik
151	(9)	,,	Mitra (1) Mitra-Varuṇa (2 to 9)	Jagatī
152	(7)	,,	Mitra-Varuṇa (1 to 7)	Trishṭup
153	(4)	,,	Vishṇu (1 to 6)	Trishṭup
154	(6)	,,	Vishṇu (1 to 6)	Trshṭup
155	(6)	,,	Indrā - Vishṇu (1 to 3) Vishṇu (4 to 6)	Jagatī
156	(5)	,,	Vishṇu (1 to 5)	Jagatī
157	(6)	,,	Aśvinau (1 to 6)	Jagatī; Trishṭup (5-6)

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Sūkta	No. of mantras	Ṛshi	Devatā (for mantras)	Chhandas
	(Ashṭaka 2, Adhyāya 3)			
158	(6)	,,	Aśvinau (1 to 6)	Trishṭup; Anushṭup (6)
159	(5)	,,	Dyāvā - Pṛthivī (1 to 5)	Jagatī
160	(5)	,,	Dyāvā - Pṛthivī (1 to 5)	Jagatī
161	(14)	,,	The Ṛbhus (1 to 14)	Jagatī; Trishṭup (14)
162	(22)	,,	Aśva (1 to 22)	Trishṭup; Jagatī (3,6)
163	(13)	,,	Aśva (1 to 13)	Trishṭup
164	(52)	,,	Viśve-devāh (1 to 41) Vāk-samudra-aksha-rāpah (42) Śaka-dhūma-Soma (43) Agni - Vāyu - Sūrya (44) Vāchah (45) Sūrya (46, 47) Kālachakra (Samvatsarah Kālah) (48) Sarasvatī (49)	Trishṭup; Jagatī (12, 15, 23, 29, 36, 41); Prastāra - Paṅkti (42); Anushṭup (51)

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Sūkta	No. of mantras	Ṛshi	Devatā (for mantras)	Chhandas
			Sādhyāh (50) Sūrya (51) Sarasvān (52)	
165	(15)	Indra (1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 10 to 12) Maruts (3,5,7,9) Agastya (maitrā - Varuṇa) (13, 14, 15)	Marutvān - Indra (1to 15)	Trishṭup
		(Ashṭaka 2, Adhyāya 4)		
166	(15)	Agastya (amitrā varuṇa)	The Maruts (1 to 15)	Jagatī; Trishṭup (14, 15)
167	(11)	,,	Indra (1) The Maruts (2 to 11)	Trishṭup; Purastāj - jyoti (10)
168	(10)	,,	The Maruts (1 to 10)	Jagatī; Trishṭup (8-10)
169	(8)	,,	Indra (1 to 8) (Marutvān - Indra)	Trishṭup; Chatushpa-dā virāṭ (2)

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Sūkta	No. of mantras	Ṛshi	Devatā (for mantras)	Chhandas
170	(5)	Indra (1, 3, 4) Agastya (2,5)	Indra (1 to 5)	Brhati (1); Anushṭup (2-4); Trishṭup(5)
171	(6)	Agastya (maitrāvaruṇa)	The Maruts (1,2) Marutvān - Indra (3 to 6)	Trishṭup
172	(3)	,,	The Maruts (1 to 3)	Gāyatrī
173	(13)	,,	Indra (1 to 13)	Trishṭup; Virāṭ - sthānā (4)
174	(10)	,,	Indra (1 to 10)	Trishṭup
175	(6)	,,	Indra (1 to 6)	Skandho-grīvī-bṛhatī (1); Anushṭup (2-5); Trishṭup(6)
176	(6)	,,	Indra (1 to 6)	Anushṭup; Trishṭup(6)
177	(5)	,,	Indra (1 to 5)	Trishṭup
178	(5)	,,	Indra (1 to 5)	Trishṭup

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Sūkta	No. of mantras	Ṛshi	Devatā (for mantras)	Chhandas
179	(6)	Lopāmudrā (1,2) Agastya (3,4) Agastya-śishya-(brahmachāri) (5,6)	Rati (1 to 6)	Trishṭup; Bṛhatī (5)
180	(10)	Agastya (maitrāvaruṇa)	Aśvinau (1 to 10)	Trishṭup
181	(9)	,,	Aśvinau (1 to 9)	Trishṭup
182	(8)	,,	Aśvinau (1 to 8)	Jagatī; Trishṭup (3,8)
183	(6)	,,	Aśvinau (1 to 6)	Trishṭup
	(Ashṭaka 2, Adhyāya 5)			
184	(6)	,,	Aśvinau (1 to 6)	Trishṭup
185	(11)	,,	Dyāvā - pṛthvī (or Parjanyāgni) (1 to 11)	Trishṭup
186	(11)	,,	Viśve-devāh (1 to 11)	Trishṭup
187	(11)	,,	Anna (Soma) (1 to 11)	Anushṭub-garbhā Ushṇik(1); Anushṭup (3, 5-7);

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Sūkta	No. of mantras	Ṛshi	Devatā (for mantras)	Chhandas
				Bṛhatī(11); Gāyatri (2,4, 8-10)
188	(11)	,,	Samiddhogni (1) Tanūnapāt (2) Iḷa (3) Barhi (4) Devīrdvāra (5) Ushāsānaktā (6) Devyau hotārau - Prāchetasau (7) Sarasvati-Iḷā-Bhārati (8) Tvashṭā (9) Vanaspati (10) Svāhākṛtayah (11)	Gāyatri
189	(8)	,,	Agni (1 to 8)	Trishṭup
190	(8)	,,	Bṛhaspati (1 to 8)	Trishṭup
191	(16)	,,	Aptṛṇa - Sūrya (Vishaghnoshadhi (1 to 16)	Anushṭup; Mahā-paṅkti (10-12); Mahā-bṛhatī (13)

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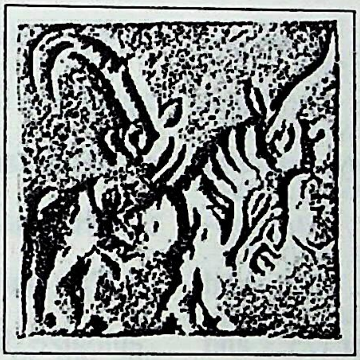
CHAPTER THREE

GĀYATRĪ MANTRA



(1) INTRODUCTION

Tradition accords unrivalled importance to the Gāyatrī Mantra, which is the tenth ṛk in the third maṇḍala of the *Ṛk-saṁhitā*. It is the mantra that is most frequently recited in the country by those who are spiritually inclined; it is among the texts that are daily recited by the devout. This has been so for several thousands of years. There is no Vedic hymn which is regarded as more sacred, or more efficacious, by laymen or masters of scripture. In the Vedic literature itself, it is repeated by mentioned, explained and annotated. Its prescription comprehends both ritualistic involvement and philosophical inquiry.

Although the text of this mantra, containing not more than twenty-four letters, is originally found in *Rgveda*

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as mentioned above, it also occurs in *Sāma-veda* (2,812), *Vājasaneyī-samhitā* (Śukla Yajurveda, 3,35;22,9;30,2 and 36,3), *Taittirīya-samhitā* (Krshṇa Yajurveda 1,5,6,4 and 8,4;4,1,11,1), *Maitrāyaṇīya-samhitā* (4,10,3 and 14,9,14), *Aitareya-brāhmaṇa* (4,32,2;5,5-6; 13,8 and 19,8) *Kaushītakī-brāhmaṇa* (23,3 and 26,10). *Gopatha-brāhmaṇa* (1,1,34), *Śatapatha-brāhmaṇa* (2,3,4,39; 13,6,2,9 and 14,9,3,11), *Taittirīya-āraṇyaka* (1,11,2 and 10,27,1), *Sāma-mantra-brāhmaṇa* and (1,6,29), *Daivata-brāhmaṇa* (3,25). Several upanishads like *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* (6,3,11) *Muṇḍaka* (6,7,34), *Śvetāśvatara* (4,18), *Kaushītakī* (91,6) and *Mahānārāyaṇīya* (15,2), seek to explain the import of this mantra, which is prescribed prominently in all the mediaeval Śrauta and Gṛhya texts (e.g. Āśvalayana-śrauta 7,6,6, Apastamba-gṛhya 4,11,9 and śrauta 20,24,6, Baudhāyana-dharma, 2,10,17,14, Śānkhāyana-śrauta 2,10,2;2,12,17;5,5,2;10,16,17 and 10,9,16 and Mānava-śrauta 5,2,4,43). Other ritual texts also (like *Ṛgvidhāna* 1,12,5 and *Āpastamba-mantra-pāṭha*) eulogize this mantra. Several purāṇas contain explanations of the mantra, legends about the goddess Gāyatrī, and prescriptions concerning the employment of the mantra in rituals and meditation. There are also Sāndhyābhāshyas (like Khaṇḍa-rāja-dīkshita's *Taittirīya-sandhyā-bhāshya*, Sāyaṇa's *Taittirīya-sandhyāmantra-vyākhyā*, and anonymous *Sandhyāmantra-vṛtti*), which explain the meaning of the Gāyatrī-mantra both ritualistically and philosophically.

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The Gāyatrī-mantra is said to indicate the absolute reality (Brahman), conditioned by names and forms. It represents the three guṇas (sattva, rajas and tamas, the basic bricks of all existence) as settled in the solar orb, the visible form of divinity. We read in *Bṛhat-siddhānta-sāra* that the luminence of the sun is composed of the three guṇas, represented by Brahmā the creator, Vishṇu the preserver and Śiva is destroyer. The three together constitute the Brahman who is conditioned.

आदित्यमण्डलगतं यत् तेजस्त्रिगुणात्मकम् ।
तदेतत् सगुणं ब्रह्म ब्रह्मविष्णुशिवात्मकम् ॥

Meru-tantra also says that this conditioned Brahman is the gateway to absolute liberation:

अथ वक्ष्यामि मन्त्रेशीं गायत्रीं वेदमातरम् ।
यथा तु सगुणं ब्रह्म गीयते प्रतिपाद्यते ।
निर्गुणं यां विना मुक्तिर्न कस्यापि प्रजापते ॥

There is another hymn in *Ṛgveda-samhitā* (5,82) which strongly reminds one of the Gāyatrī mantra. Ascribed to the seer Śyāvāśva-ātreya and dedicated to the devatā Savitṛ, this mantra is described in the *Anukramaṇi* as another 'sāvitri' (tat savitur iti navarcham daśamam sūktam śyāvāśvasyārsham', 'sāvitram ity uktatvāt sāvitram'). This sūkta with nine mantras is in Gāyatri chhandas except for the first, which is in anushṭup. ('tat-saviturnava gāyatram ādyānushṭup). The first mantra begins, curiously enough, with the words 'tat savitur vṛṇīmahe' and ends with 'dhīmahi'. This sūkta, in a way, explains all the words of the familiar

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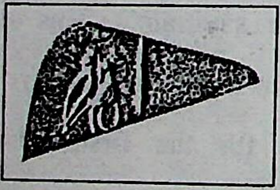
Gāyatri-mantra. And even this sūkta finds mention in several basic scriptural texts, like *Aitareya-brāhmaṇa* (16,3;19,9;20,2 and 25,9) *Aitareya-āraṇyaka* (1,5,3,1), *Taittirīya-āraṇyaka* (1,11,3) and *Chhāndogya-upanishad* (5,2,7). And mediaeval ritual-texts like *Āśvalāyana-gṛhya* (1,20.4), *Āśvalāyana-śrauta* (5,18,50, *Śānkhāyana-śrauta* (8,3,8), *Āpastamba śrauta* (6,22,1) and *Śānkhāyana-gṛhya* (6,4,8) make references to this hymn.



Gāyatri is actually the name of one of the metrical forms (chhandas) adopted in *Ṛgveda*. And this metrical form is an important one. In *Ṛgveda-samhitā*, out of the total 10,552 mantras, as many as 2,456 mantras (including the seven Vālakhilya-mantras) are in gāyatri-chhandas. This is only next to the trishṭup-chhandas, which has the largest number of mantras (4,251); after gāyatri comes jagatī with 1,346 mantras. It is also to be noted that the samhitās of all the Vedas (excepting Kṛshṇa-yajurveda) begin with mantras in the gāyatri-metre. And among the numerous metrical forms used in the Vedic lore, gāyatri is the shortest (with twenty-four letters) and is also regarded as the most basic, the very first. We read so in *Śatapatha-brāhmaṇa* (1,6,2,10):

कनिष्ठछन्दः सद् गायत्री प्रथमा छन्दसां युज्यते ।

And *Taittirīya-āraṇyaka* (10,34) describes gāyatri as the mother of all

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sacred metrical forms (chhandasām mātā). It was but a short step from this description to eulogize Gāyatri, not only the metrical form but the particular mantra known by that name, as the mother of the Vedas: 'veda-mātā' (e.g. *Atharva-veda*, 19,71,1, 'stutā mayā varadā veda-mātā'). Now the Sanskrit expression 'veda-māta' is a compound (samāsa) which may be taken to mean either the mother or progenitor of the Vedic corpus ('vedānām matā', shashṭhī-tatpurusha) or 'having the vedic corpus as the mother or progenitor' ('vedā eva mātā yasyāh sa-', bahuvrīhi). *Padmapuraṇa* (svarga-khaṇḍa, 53,58) prefers the first meaning when it says

गायत्री वेदजननी गायत्री लोकपावनी ।
गायत्र्या न परं जप्यमेतद्विज्ञाय मुच्यते ॥

or *Skānda-purāṇa* (Kāshī-khaṇḍa, 9,53)

गायत्री वेदजननी गायत्री ब्राह्मणप्रसूः ।
गातारं त्रायते यस्माद् गायत्री तेन गीयते ॥

Manu (2,77), on the other hand, tells us that the three lines of the gāyatri were extracted from the three Vedas:

त्रिभ्य एव तु वेदेभ्यः पादं पादमदूदुहत् ।
तदित्यृचोऽस्याः सावित्र्याः परमेष्ठी प्रजापतिः ॥

There is the case of transferred epithet in the identification of the gāyatrīchhandas with the mantra (RV 3,62,10) celebrated as the Gāyatri. This mantra is not known to Kātyāyana's *Sarvānukramaṇī* (20,9) in its present exceptional significance : here it is in common with the mantras

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4 to 18 in this sūkta, in the metrical form known as gāyatri ('chturthādyā -pañchadaśa gāyatryah') and its devatā is Savitṛ (as he is for the mantras 10 to 12); the seer is Viśvāmitra, as he is for all the mantras 1 to 15 in the sūkta. This mantra is not singled out by Kātyāyana on any count.

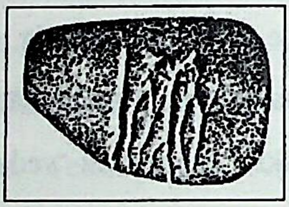
There is reason to suppose that this mantra was in former times known as Sāvitri, for it is addressed to the devatā, Savitṛ (savitur iyam).

In *Brahadāraṇyaka-upanishad* (5,14,5) Sāvitri is explicitly stated as the name of the mantra in Gayatri-chhandas-

गायत्रीमेव सावित्रीमनुब्रूयात् ॥

And we read in *Maitri-upanishad* (6,2) the means for reaching Brahman is said to be the sāvitri-mantra with praṇava and vyāhṛtis-

अर्वाग्विचरत एतौ प्राणादित्या एता उपसीतोमित्येद-
क्षरेण व्याहृतिभिः सावित्र्या चेति ॥



Manu (2,77), while explaining the origin of the three pādas of the gāyatri-mantra from the three Vedas, he uses the expression Sāvitri for the mantra;

त्रिभ्य एवं तु वेदेभ्यः पादं पादमुदूदुहत् ।
तदित्यृचोऽस्याः सावित्र्याः परमेष्ठी प्रजापतिः ॥

He knows the mantra only as Sāvitri, for he says in another context (2,81).

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ओङ्कारपूर्विकास्तिस्रो महाव्याहृतयोऽव्ययाः ।
त्रिपदा चैव सावित्री विज्ञेयं ब्रह्मणो मुखम् ॥

Elsewhere (2,83), he uses the same expression when he declares that there is no mantra superior to this ('sāvitryāstu param nāsti'), and suggests that one must retire to the forest and recite this mantra repeatedly, with great concentration (2,104, 'sāvitrīm apy adhīyīta gatvāraṇye samāhitah').

There are of course legends in the Vedic corpus (RV 4,26 and 27) and in the supplementary texts (like *Taittirīya-samhitā* 6,1,6,1-3 and *Aitareya-brāhmaṇa,* 5,27 and 13,25-28) to explain the preëminence of Gāyatri, but it is only the chhandas that is focus of attention here. The legends relate to the bringing of Soma from the third and highest among the upper realms by Gāyatri in the form of a golden winged hawk (śyena or suparṇa). Suparṇī, the rival of Kadrū, had various metrical forms (chhandas) as her offsprings. Suparṇi was enslaved to Kadrū, and the means of her release was to bring Soma to Kadrū. Jagatī, the metrical form with fourteen letters, tried first and rose to a height. It could not reach where Soma was, and returned, but losing three of its letters in the bargain. Then Trishṭup, another metrical form with thirteen letters, tried to reach the place where Soma was preserved, and failed; it returned, again with one of its letters gone. It was then that Gāyatri, which had only four letters, rose up and procured Soma. When it was returning, it gathered the four letters that had been lost on the way

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by the earlier metrical forms. Thus Gāyatri became eight-lettered ('sā ashṭāksharā samapadyata'). It had assumed the form of a divine bird; and it brought to the earth three ritual observances (savana), two by its legs and one by its beak. These are the rituals in the morning (prātas-savana), at noon (mādhyandina-savana) and in the eventide (tṛtīya-savana). They constitute the three pādas of Gāyatri, the chhandas, with eight letters in each pāda. Hence the description of Gāayatri in *Taittirīya-āraṇyaka* (10,35) as "consisting of twenty-four letters and three pādas, with each pāda eight-lettered" ('gāyatrī chaturvimśatyaksharā, tripadā, ashṭāksharātmaka-padā'). Śamkara also refers to this three-fold origin of the greatness of Gāyatri (*Vedānta-sūtra-bhāshya*, 1,1,5): (1) bringing down Soma to the realm of mortals, Soma being essential for all major rituals; (2) gathering the lost letters of the metrical forms, and thus entering materially into all the metrical forms; and (3) occasioning the three savanas for the benefit of the mortals. But he adds, following the statement in *Chhāndoga-upanishad* (3,12,1 'gāyatrī vāidam sarvam'), that Gāyatrī is the only metrical form which leads directly to the realization of the supreme reality, Brahman ('satsu anekeshu chhandassu gāyatryā brahma-jñānatayā upādānam'). There is also an explanation that the upper regions where Soma was stored symbolizes sun (āditya), and Soma itself is the solar lustre (āditya-teja) and the bird-gāyatri that procured it is speech (vāk). The benefits of Soma are also enumerated : protection of

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body, elimination of diseases, removal of depression, aversion to hostility, institution of good thoughts, illumination by an inward austerity. (cf RV, 8,48). And the ninth maṇḍala of *Ṛgveda*, Which is entirely dedicated to Soma-pavamāna as the devatā, points out that Soma inspires the divine vision (dhiyah) (cf.9,3,2,; 9,65,12 and 10,99,6). The association of the mantra which invokes sun to inspire bright visions, with the Gāyatri-chhandas, which brought down Soma for our sake, is surely not accidental.

It may also be noted that in the *Ṛgveda-samhitā* itself, we come across the expressions 'gāyatra' (or gāyatram, with neuter ending), while referring specifically to the metrical form (as for instance in RV 1,12,11,'ā bhara gāyatreṇa navīyasā', explained by Sāyaṇa "gāyatri-chhandaskenānena sūktena") and 'gayatriu' (with masculine ending), while refering to those who have mastered this particular metrical form which is amenable to musical rendering, the sāma-chanters (as in RV 1,10,1, 'gāyanti tvā gāyatrino', meaning" sāmagāh" or "udgātārah"; there is the explanation, "gāyatram sāma yeshām udgātrīṇām asti te gāyatriṇah"). The word 'gāyatra', however is taken to signify what is related to the metrical form known as 'gāyatrī' ('gāyatryāh idam', gāyatrī+a or aṇ-suffix in the sense of 'idam'); and when the word is formed the 'ī'-ending gets lost (cf. Pāṇini, 6,4,148 'yasyeti cha'); and we have 'gāyatra'. The original word may be 'gāyatri' writh the feminine ending, probably to correspond with the gender

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of 'ṛk' with which it was identified. Thus the early descriptions of the familiar gāyatri mantra as 'chhandasām mātā', 'veda-mātā' and so on, suggested a feminine deity writh that name. We have in *Taittirīya-āraṇyaka* (1,34), for instance, the invocation:

आयातु वरदा देवी अक्षरं ब्रह्मसम्मितम् ।
गायत्रीं छन्दसां मातेदं ब्रह्म जुषस्व मे ॥

and farewell (1,36) :

उत्तमे शिखरे जाते भूम्यां पर्वतमूर्धनि ।
ब्राह्मणेभ्योऽभ्यनुज्ञाता गच्छ देवि यथासुखम् ॥

And Gāyatrī, being associated with the three 'savanas' (morning, midday and evening), was also imagined to have three forms: Gāyatri in the morning, Sāvitrī at midday and Sarasvatī in evening. *Parāśara-madhavīya* says :

गायत्री नाम पूर्वाह्ने सावित्री मध्यमे दिने ।
सरस्वती च सायाह्ने सैव सन्ध्या त्रिधा मता ॥

The three names occur in *Taittiriya-āraṇyaka* (1,35), while invocations are made ('gāyatrīm āvāhayāmi, sāvitrīm āvāhayāmi, sarasvatīm āvāhayāmi'). While explaining the origin of these names, however, it is emphasized that it is one goddess who protects the chanters (and hence called Gāyatrī) who is responsible for creation of all things and is of the nature of speech (and hence called Sarasvatī) :

गायत्री चोच्यते तस्माद्गायन्तं त्रायते यतः ।
सवितृद्योतनात्सैव सावित्री परिकीर्तिता ।
जगतः प्रसवित्री वा वाग्रूपत्वात्सरस्वती ॥

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There is also a suggestion that these names refer to the three pādas of the mantra known as Gāyatrī. Deriving from the three mātrās of the praṇava, the first mātrā अ is identified with *Ṛgveda,* and the first pāda of the Gāyatri-mantra; 'Savitṛ is the key word here, and it signifies creation and inspiration (sūte). The second mātrā उ corresponds with *Sāma-veda* and the second pāda of the mantra; 'dhīmahi' is the key-word here, and it signifies attentive articulation (gāna-kriyā). And the third mātrā म is Yajurveda and the third pāda of the mantra, where the inportant word is 'dhiyah' which means ritualistic action (karma). They are associated with Sāvitrī, (solar significance), Gāyatrī (singing from 'gai śabde') and Sarasvatī, (onflowing ritual) respectively. This order accords well with the enumeration of Vedas in the Vedic corpus itself (cf, Purusha-sūkta, RV,10,90,9, 'ṛchah sāmāni jajñire; yajus tasmād ajāyata'), and also with the dawn being associated with Sāvitri. (Savitṛ being the solar phase of arousing all creatures to life).

In this context, one may also note that in *Śāṇḍilya-upanishad* (1,17), the first mātrā of praṇava is identified with Gāyatrī, the second with Sāvitrī and the third with Sarasvatī.

अकारमूर्ती रक्ताङ्गी हंसवाहिनी दण्डहस्ता बाला
गायत्री भवति ।
उकारमूर्तिः श्वेताङ्गी तार्क्ष्यवाहनी चक्रहस्ता युवती
सावित्री भवति ।
मकारमूर्तिः कृष्णाङ्गी वृषभवाहिनी त्रिशूलधरा
सरस्वती भवति ।
अकारादित्रयाणां सर्वकारणमेकाक्षरं परं ज्योतिः
प्रणवं भवतीति ध्यायेत् ॥

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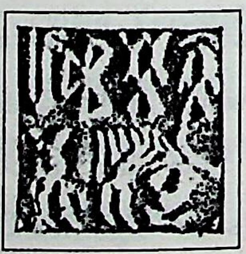
But the order with Gāyatrī being the first, followed by Sāvitrī and Sarasvatī, was occasioned by the account in *Aitareya-brāhmaṇa* (13,25) associating Gāyatrī with prātas-savana ('sāshṭāksharā gāyatrī prātas-savanam udayat... gāyatrī svamāyatanam akuruta.. tasmāt tat samṛddhatamam manyante; sarveshām savanānām agriyo mukhyo bhavati'). This account also suggests that other two savanas are made possible by Gāyatrī participating with trishṭup and jagati; indicating that the other forms (Sāvatri and Sarasvatī) are in reality only Gāyatri. Further, we sead in *Śatapatha-brāhmaṇa*) (4,3,2,10) that because Gāyatri by herself could accomplish the first savana, ('gāyatraivaikākinī prātas savanam vahati') and was indispensable for the other two savanas, all the three savanas may be said to be accomplished by Gāyatrī alone ('gāyatrāṇi vai sarvāni savanāni'). It is thus that the Smṛti-texts speak of three forms of Gāyatrī (tri-rūpā-gāyatrī); and associate them with the three Vedas and three deities, Brahmā, Rudra and Vishṇu:

प्रभाते रविबिम्बस्थां रक्तवर्णां कुमारिकाम् ।
हंसारूढां साक्षमालामृग्वेदां ब्रह्मदैवताम् ॥
माध्यंदिने च सावित्रीं रविबिम्बस्थितांशजाम् ।
यजुर्वेदमयीं रुद्रदैवत्यां युवां श्वेतरूपिणीम् ॥
सायं सरस्वतीं सूर्यमध्यस्थां कृष्णवर्णिनीम् ।
वृद्धां चतुर्भुजां शंखचक्रां पक्षीन्द्रवाहनाम् ।
सामवेदमयीं विष्णुदैवत्यां क्रमशो जपेत् ॥



The sun himself is said to have these three forms: Brahmā in the

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morning, Rudra at midday, and Vishṇu in the evening.

उदये ब्रह्मरूपं मध्याह्ने तु महेश्वरः ।
सायाह्ने विष्णुरूपं तु त्रिरूपं वै दिवाकरः ॥

We can see that Gāyatrī even as a chhandas is credited with great sanctity, and all mantras in this chhandas are of especial significance. It is especially so because this chhandas is associated with Agni, the first and foremost of devatās in the Vedic corpus, and the devāta without whom no ritual can be performed. Trishṭup-chhandas is likewise associated with the devatā Indra, and Jagatī-chhandas with the Viśvedevas. *Śatapatha-brāhmaṇa* (6,1,3,19) says that the mantra in the gāyatrīchhandas is Agni himself ('gāyatrī vā agnih'; cf also *Taittirīya-samhitā*, 2,2,5, 'agnir vai gāyatrī'); and the gāyatrī -chhandas is particularly suited for eulogizing Agni ('gāyatram agneśchhandah'). This is why in all sacrificial rituals, the mantras that are first recited are in this chhandas. We read in *Śatapatha-brāhmaṇa* (9,1,2,35) :

गायत्रं पुरस्तद् गायति । अग्निर्वै गायत्रं
अग्निमेवास्यै तच्छिरः करोत्यथो शिरः ॥

It is declared in this text that the gāyatrī-chhandas (with eight letters to which the praṇava is added) is itself the first half of the sacrificial ritual (3,4,1,15):

नवाक्षरा वै गायत्री अष्टौ तानि यान्यन्वाह
प्रणवो नवमः । पूर्वार्धो वै यज्ञस्य गायत्री ॥

The chhandas Gāyatri, according to the legend related in *Śatapatha-brāhmaṇa* (1,8,2,10), became the divine hawk (divas śyenah) and

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brought the Soma to the world in which we live (cf also 3,4,1,12). But this hawk is identified with Agni, and Gāyatri is not different from Agni, nor from Vishṇu, the devatā that pervades all three realms and dwells beyond them (ibid. 3,5,1,12), for Soma is in reality Vishṇu:

श्येनाय त्वा सोमभृते विष्णवेत्वेति ।
तद् गायत्री मन्वाभजति ।
सा यद् गायत्री श्येनो भूत्वा दिवः
सोममाभरत् ॥

(cf. also 3,9,4,10:

श्येनाय त्वा सोमभृत इति । यद्गायत्र्यै
मिमतेऽग्नये त्वा रायस्पोषद इत्यग्निर्वै गायत्री ॥)

The mantra that is now celebrated as the Gāyatrī is no doubt in the gāyatrīchhandas with all these associations. But this is not its only claim to the extraordinary importance that this mantra has acquired in tradition. The real significance of the mantra is that it articulates, as few other mantras do, the special merit of the gāyatri-chhandas that the Brāhmaṇas and the Upanishads almost unanimously speak of:

छन्दस्तस्यास्तु गायत्रं गायत्रीत्युच्यते ततः ।
गायन्तं त्रायते यस्माद् गायत्री तु ततः स्मृता ॥

'This mantra called Gāyatri has the gāyatra-chhandas, but it also protects one who chants it, and that is why it is called Gayatrī' We have in *Chhāndogya* (3) a statement to this effect: the Gāyatri-mantra is indeed the most fundamental speech; and this speech is all this, and Gāyatri is so named because it articulates effectively as well as protects:

वाग्वै गायत्री । वाग्वा इदँ सर्वँ ।
गायति त्रायते च ॥

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The root of the word 'gāyatri' is 'gai' (śabde), which has the sense of making sound, of speaking and of singing. That is why the ṛks in the gāyatri-chhandas are amenable to being musically rendered (gānānukūla-ṛk), and Sāman-chants are mostly ṛks in gāyatrāchhandas (hence RV 1,10,1, 'gāyanti tvā gāyatriṇah', where 'gāyatriṇah' means sāmagāh or udgātārah, the singers of the Sāman -chants). 'Yāska (7,12,5) also explains 'gāyatri' in terms of singing of eulogies ('gāyateh stuti-karmaṇah'). The word has also another root 'traing' (pālane) which means 'to protect'. The grammatical construction of the word involves 'gāyopapadāt trāyateh; atonupasarge kah (3,2,3) iti kah; gaurāditrānīsh'.

There is another ancient explanation given by Yāska, which is rather intriguing. Gāyatrī is merely a camouflaged expression for trigāyā which is really meant, by a process of changing the order of syllables (varṇa-vyatyaya). The expression 'trigāyā' means "having three modes of articulation, mind, speech and body" ('trigamanā vā viparitā' ; 'trigamanā trishu rūpeshu, manasi vachasi vapushi cheti gamanam gatim dadāti sā'). That is to say, Gāyatri finds expression in, or inspires, our mental processes, speech behaviour and physical acivities. Further, *Śatapatha-brāhmaṇa* (14,8,15,7) interprets 'gāyatri' to signify that it protects the life-principles (prāṇa), which are called 'gayā'.

सा हैषा गायांस्तत्रे । प्राणा वै गयास्तत्प्राणांस्तत्रे
तद् गया ँ स्तत्रे तस्माद् गायत्री नाम ॥

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Bṛhad-yājñavalkya-smṛti explains that by reciting this mantra, one gets protected from various evils (like accepting gifts and consuming impure or improper food) and from major and minor sins:

प्रतिग्रहान्नदोषाच्च पातकादुपपातकात् ।
गायत्री प्रोच्यते तस्माद् गायन्तं त्रायते यतः ॥

This idea is repeated in all Smṛti texts and purāṇas, so much so that the present understanding of the merit of the Gāyatri-mantra is that it is capable of protecting the person who recites it ('gāyantam trāyate yasmād gāyatrīti smṛtā budhaih'). In fact, the Smṛti texts tell us that if one repeats this mantra ten times, all the minor unbecoming omissions and commissions done during the day and that night will be eliminated ('rātryahnoh yat-Kṛtam laghu pāpam praṇudati'); if a hundred times, a host of sins will be destroyed ('pāpaugha-śamanī'); if a thousand times, even the great sins, committed knowingly or unknowingly, will be rendered null and void ('mahrāpātaka-dhvamsini'); and if a lakh times, the sins of seven lives will be undone ('sapta-janma-pātaka-nāśinī'); and if a crore of times, whatever one desires will be secured ('yad ichchhati tad āpnuyāt'). According to Tantra-manuals, the gāyatri-mantra recited in a reverse fashion (viz. the last syllable first and so on, including the vyāhṛtis and the praṇava) will be effective in practices of black magic and sorcery ('abhichāreshu tām devīm viparītām vichintayat'). One of the texts pointedly asks what it is that would

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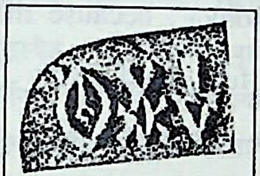
be impossible to achieve when the mantra is well recited:

किं किं न दद्याद् गायत्री सम्यगेवमुपासिता ?



There were enthusiasts who declared that the Gāyatri-mantra alone would outweigh the entire Vedas with all its accessories. For example, *Bṛhad-yogi-yājñavalkya-samhitā* (4,80) says:

गायत्रीं चैव वेदांश्च तुलया समतोलयन् ।
वेदा एकत्र साङ्गास्तु गायत्री चैकतः स्मृता ॥

Another text, *Bṛhat-parāśara-smṛti* (4,16), tells us that the creator once wighed the Vedas alongside the Gāyatri-mantra, and found that the latter was thousand times weightier than the former:

गायत्री चैव वेदाश्च ब्रह्मणा तोलितः पुरा ।
वेदेभ्यश्च सहस्रेभ्यो गायत्र्यति गरीयसी ॥

Skānda-purāṇa (Kāśīkhaṇḍa, 9,49-50) enumerates the traditional books of importance and places Gāyatri-mantra on top of all of them. Among the eighteen branches of learning, Mīmāmsā is decidedly superior; but the Nyāya-discipline is of higher value than even Mīmāmsā. And the Puraṇas are even more valuable. The Dharma-śāstra texts are superior to the Purāṇas, and, of course, the Vedas are of still higher standing. Upanishads are of greater value than the Vedic texts. However, the Gāyatrī-mantra is the most superior and of the highest value:

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अष्टादशसु विद्यासु मीमांसाऽतिगरीयसी
ततोऽपि तर्कशास्त्राणि पुराणं तेभ्य एव च ।
ततोऽपि धर्मशास्त्राणि तेभ्यो गुर्वी श्रुतिर्द्विज
ततोऽप्युपनिषच्छ्रेष्ठा गायत्री च ततोऽधिका ॥

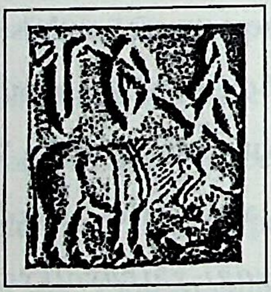
According to *Samvarta-smṛti* (214), there is nothing more effective than the recitation of the Gāyatri-mantra in the matter of getting rid of sins:

गायत्र्यास्तु परं नास्ति शोधनं पापकर्मणाम् ॥

It is small wonder, therefore, that the Gāyatri-mantra is involved in a big way in the daily ritual known as sandhyā (see Appendix). The recitation of the Gāyatri-mantra is so important in this ritual (which is a laterday substitute for the savana-rite) that the mantra itself is described as Sandhyā. *Devī-bhāgavata* (11,17), for instance, says:

या संध्या सैव गायत्री सच्चिदानन्दरूपिणी ॥

It is explained in *Prayoga-pārijāta* that the Gāyatri-mantra is called 'sandhyā', because the mantra merits perfect meditation ('samyak dhyeyatvāt sandhyā, from the root 'dhyai chintāyām'



The tantrik approach to the Gāyatri-mantra and its puraścharaṇa is best illustrated in the following excerpt from *Prapañcha-sāra:*

प्रणवस्य व्याहृतीनां गायत्र्यैक्यमथोच्यते ।
अत्रापि तत्पदं पूर्वं प्रोक्तं तदनुवर्ण्यते ॥१॥
तद्द्वितीयैकवचनमनेनाखिलवस्तुनः ।
सृष्ट्यादि कारणं तेजोरूपमादित्य मण्डले ॥२॥

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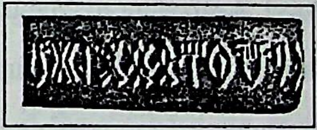
अभिधेयं सदानन्दं परं ब्रह्माभिधीयते ।
यत् तत्सवितुरित्युक्तं षष्ठ्येकवचनात्मकम् ॥३॥
धातोरिति समुत्पन्नं प्राणिप्रसववाचकात् ।
सर्वासां प्राणिजातानामिति प्रसवितुः सदा ॥४॥
वरेण्यं वरणीयत्वात् सेवनीयतया तथा ।
भजनीयतया सर्वैः प्रार्थनीयतया स्मृतम् ॥५॥
पूर्वस्याष्टाक्षरस्यैवं व्याहृतिर्भूरिति स्मृता ।
पापस्य भर्जनाद् भर्गो भक्तिस्निग्धतया तथा ॥६॥
देवस्य वृष्टिदानादिगुणयुक्तस्य नित्यशः ।
प्रभुत्वेन प्रकाशेन दीप्यमानस्य वा तथा ॥७॥
ध्यै चिन्तायामतो धातोर्निष्पन्नं धीमहीत्यदः ।
निगमाद्येन दिव्येन विद्यारूपेण चक्षुषा ॥८॥
दृश्यो हिरण्मयो देव आदित्ये नित्यसंस्थितः ।
हीनताररहितं तेजो यस्य स्यात् स हिरण्मयः ॥९॥
यः सूक्ष्मः सोऽहमित्येवं चिन्तयामः सदैव हि ।
द्वितीयाष्टाक्षरस्यैव व्याहृतिर्भुव ईरिता ॥१०॥
धियो बुद्धिर्मनोरस्य च्छान्दसत्वात् समीरितम् ।
कृतश्च लिंगव्यत्यासः सूत्रात् सुप्तिङ्पग्रहात् ॥११॥
यत्तु तेजो निरुपमं सर्वदेवमयात्मकम् ।
भजतां पापनाशस्य हेतुभूततयोऽच्यते ॥१२॥
न इति प्रोक्त आदेशः षष्ठ्यसौ युष्मदस्मदोः ।
तस्मादस्माकमित्यर्थः प्रार्थनायां प्रचोदयात् ॥१३॥
तृतीयाष्टाक्षरस्यापि व्याहृतिः स्वरितीरिता ।
एवं दश पदान्यस्यास्त्रयश्चाष्टाक्षराः स्मृताः ॥१४॥
षडक्षरश्च चत्वारः स्युश्चतुर्विंशदक्षराः ।
इत्थं भूतं यदेतस्य देवस्य सवितुर्विभोः ॥१५॥
वरेण्यं भजतां पापविनाशनकरं परम् ।
भर्गोऽस्माभिरभिध्यातं धियस्तन्नः प्रचोदयात् ॥१६॥
उक्तैवमत्र गायत्री पुनस्तच्छिर उच्यते ।
आपो ज्योती रस इति सोमाग्न्योस्तेज उच्यते ॥१७॥
तदात्मकं जगत्सर्वं रसस्तेजोद्वयं स्मृतम् ।
अमृतं तदनाशित्वात् बृहत्वाद् ब्रह्म गद्यते ॥१८॥
यदानन्दात्मकं ब्रह्म सत्यज्ञानदिलक्षणम् ।
तद्भूर्भुवः स्वरित्युक्तं सोहमित्योमुदाहृतम् ॥१९॥
एतत्तु वेदवत्स्यात्तु वेदस्य शिर उच्यते ।
लक्षणैरिति निर्दिष्टो वेदसारेषु निष्ठितः ॥२०॥

(2) THE PRAṆAVA



The mantra celebrated as the Gāyatri, which occurs first in *Ṛgveda* (3,62,10), occurs in two forms; without the vyāhṛtis (bhūh, bhuvah and suvah, to be explained shortly) in *Ṛgveda* referred to above, in *Sukla-yajurveda* (Vājasaneya:- samhitā, 3,35; 30,2), *Sāma-veda* (uttarārchika 13,3); and and in *Atharva-veda*, (3,10,2); with vyāhṛtis in *Kṛishṇa-yajurveda*

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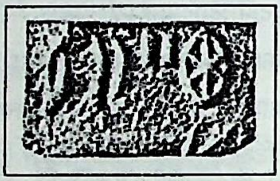
(Taittirīya-samhitā, 1.5.6.4), Taittirīya-āraṇyaka (1,11.2) and also in Vājasaneyi-samhitā (36.3). The form of Gāyatrī without the vyāhṛtis is often knows as Brahma-gāyatri, while the form with vyāhrtis is Viśvāmitra-gāyatri. Both forms, however, are involved in the Sandhyā ritual although the one with vyāhrtis is preferred. According to Manu, Gāyatri (or Sāvitri) to be effective must always be accompanied by praṇava and the vyāhrtis:

ओंकारपूर्विकास्तिस्रो महाव्याहृतयोऽव्ययाः ।
त्रिपदा चैव सावित्री विज्ञेयं ब्रह्मणो मुखम् ॥

Bodhāyana-dharma-sūtra insists that in the pranāyāma-requence of the Sandhyā-ritual, the Gāyatri-mantra recited thrice must be preceded by the pranava and the vyāhṛtis and followed by the formula 'omāpojyoti', (called Gāyatri-śiras or head of the Gāyatri-mantra, to be explained later):

सव्याहृतिं सप्रणवां गायत्रीं शिरसा सह ।
त्रि पठेदायतप्राणः प्राणायामः स उच्यते ॥



Similarly in 'japa', which is the most important sequence of the Sandhyā-ritual ('praṇava-vyāhṛtiyutām gāyatrīm vai japet tatah')

ओंकारपूर्वमुच्चार्य भूर्भुवःस्वस्तथैव च ।
गायत्रीं प्रणवं चान्ते जप एवमुदाहृतः ॥

Śaunaka commends that the Gāyatri-mantra with the praṇava and the three vyāhṛtis must be brought to mind before undertaking any sacred

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ritual, including the study of the Vedas:

ओंकारं व्याहृतीस्तिस्रो गायत्रीं त्रिपदां तथा ।
मनसैवानुस्मृत्य वेदादिकमुपक्रमेत् ॥

Even Tāntrik texts like *Śāradātilaka* describe the Gāyatri-mantra with the praṇava, the seven vyāhṛtis and the Gāyatri-śiras as the essence extracted from all the Vedas:

प्रणवाद्या व्याहृतयः सप्त स्युस्तत्पदादिकाः ।
चतुर्विंशत्यक्षरात्मा गायत्री शिरसान्विता ।
सर्ववेदोद्धृतः सारो मन्त्रोऽयं समुदाहृतः ॥

Texts like *Prapañcha-sāra*, in fact, speak of the identity of the praṇava, the vyāhṛtis and the gāyatri-mantra:

प्रणवस्य व्याहृतीनां गायत्र्यैक्यमथोऽच्यते ॥

The view of Ānanda-tīrtha, expressed in the prologue to his *Ṛg-bhāshya* is substantially the same. Jaya-tīrtha, his commentator, explains that the import of the praṇava is expanded in the vyāhṛtis, and the meaning of the vyāhṛtis is explicated in Gāyatri ('yasmād vyāhṛtīritas tasmāt sa eva gāyatryartha īritah; vyāhṛtyarthatvād gāyatryāh').

Even if the vyāhṛtis are omitted in accordance with some ritual requirement or in compliance with some family tradition, the praṇava is never given up. In fact, the praṇava is regarded in many texts as an integral part of the Gāyatri-mantra. The reason for this is given as follows. The gāyatri-chhandas which has twenty-four letters is divided into three pādas (or lines), and each pāda must have

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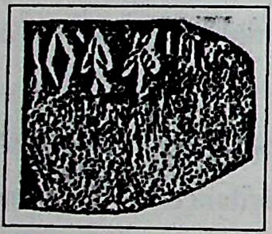
eight letters. The first pāda of the Gāyatri-mantra, however, has only seven letters (tat-sa-vi-tur va-re-ṇyam); the chhandas requirement is fulfilled only when 'om' is added to the line at the beginning, thus making the number of letters in the line eight (adyonkāra-sahitā ashṭaksharā').



Skanda-purāṇa (Kāśīkhaṇḍa, 9,51) prescribes only praṇava to be added to the gāyatri-mantra:

दुर्लभा सर्वमन्त्रेषु गायत्री प्रणवान्विता ।
गायत्र्या नाधिकं किञ्चित् त्रयीषु परिगीयते ॥

The persistent, wide-spread and deep-rooted popularity of praṇava (or Omkāra) throughout the country and among all sections of the people is well-known. There is no religious symbol as characteristic of Hinduism as this sacred syllable. Even in the Vedic lore, its prominence is eulogized. It is uniformly regarded as the sum and substance of the Vedic corpus (e.g. *Kaṭha-upanishad,* 1,2,15, 'sarve vedā yat padam āmananti ... tat te padam sangraheṇa bravīmi om iti'; comm. 'omkārah sarvā-vedānām sāra-bhūtah prakīrtitah'). *Bodhāyana-dharma-sūtra* (3,1,5) tells us that the Vedic corpus begins with praṇava and closes with it; indeed all articulation is om; one must, therefore, attend to it:

प्रणवाद्यास्तथा वेदाः प्रणवे पर्यवस्थिताः ।
वाङ्मयं प्रणवं सर्वं तस्मात्प्रणवमभ्यसेत् ॥

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While the general understanding is that at the beginning of creation there was the sound, om, from which in due course the Vedas were formed, *Gandharva-tantra* informs us that the omkāra (praṇava) was in the distant past extracted out of the three Vedas ('veda-trayād samuddhṛtya praṇavam nirmame purā'). The general understanding, mentioned above, is illustrated by what the *Skānda-purāṇa* (Kāśīkhaṇḍa, ch.35 end) says :

ओंकार प्रभवा वेदा ओंकारप्रभवा स्वराः ।
ओंकार प्रभवं सर्वं त्रैलोक्यं सचराचरम् ॥

The Vedas are extensive and diffuse, and necessitate extended and intensive study before one can appreciate the main import. The purpose of ready recognition and practical application is better served by steady contemplation on Om, which is the most effective symbol of Brahman (taught by the Vedas). *Chhāndogya-upanishad* (1,1,1,3) has it that this one syllable Om is the 'udgītha', the supreme and transcendental (ut), articulation (gī) and attainment (tha); and that one must offer devotion to it:

ओमित्येकाक्षरमुद्गीथमुपासीत ।
आमिति ह्युद्गायति ।

It is in this sense that Manu says that while pursuing the realization of self or attempting to acquire self-discipline, the practice of Om is to be resorted to ('ātma-jñāne śame cha syād vedābhyase cha yatnavān'; praṇavābhyāsa, according to Vijñāneśvara).

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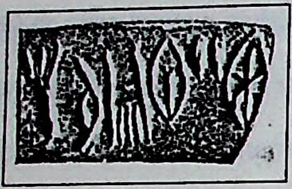

We read in *Harivamśa* (bhavishya, 81, 86-87) a detailed account of how one must employ Omkāra in spiritual practice:

नासिकाग्रं समालोक्य पठन् ब्रह्म सनातनम् ।
निर्वातस्थो यथा दीपः प्रोच्चरन् प्रणतः सदा ॥
प्रणवं वाचकं मत्वा वाच्यं ब्रह्मेति निश्चितः ।
एकाग्रं सततं कृत्वा चित्तं विष्णौ समर्पितम् ।
विकल्परहितं चित्तं हृदि मध्ये निवेशयेत् ॥

And *Chhāndogya* (5,1,1,3) not only, identifies 'Om' with udgītha, but also points out that at the adhyātma level the chief vital principle in every organism is identical with it.

अथ खलु य उद्गीथः स प्रणवो यः प्रणवः
स उद्गीथ इति। अथाध्यात्मं, य एवायं मुख्यः
प्राणः तमुद्गीथमुपासीतोमिति ह्येष स्वरन्नेति ॥

This is for the purpose of contemplation; for, as it is said in *Taittirīya-āraṇyaka* (10,33) 'the monosyllable Om (which is udgītha as well as the principal prāna) is verily the Brahman' ('omity ekāksharam brahma'). If Om is the word (vāchaka), Brahman is the object intended by it (vāchya). *Nṛsimhottara-tāpanīya* (6) says that the intended sense of Om (vāchyārtha) is Brahman. We find an explanation in *Muṇḍaka-upanishad* (2,4): Om is the bow, the self of the devotee is the dart, and Brahman is the target; one must shoot with care, and must enter himself into the target:

प्रणवो धनुः शरो ह्यात्मा
ब्रह्म तल्लक्ष्यमुच्यते ।
अप्रमत्तेन वेद्धव्यम्
शरवत् तन्मयो भवेत् ॥

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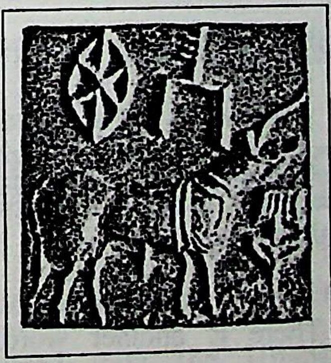
Taittirīya-upanishad (1,8,1) wants us to contemplate upon the self as the Omkāra, which is in fact all that is there:

ओमिति ब्रह्म । ओमितीदँ सर्वम् ।
ओमित्येवं ध्यायथ आत्मानम् ॥

Chhāndogya (1,1,1,3) describes Om as the most appetising essence of all tastes (viz. all beings 'rasānām rasa-tamah'), and explains: water is the essence of earth, medicinal plants (oshadhi) the essence of water, the human being or, the person (purusha) is the essence of the plants; speech (vāk) is the essence of the person; and the ṛk (eulogy in *Ṛgveda*) is essence of speech; the song (sāman, the content of Sāma-veda) is the essence of ṛk; and the essence of sāman is the udgītha (or praṇava, Om). This is how the praṇava is the ultimate essence of all things. And it is also the ground of all things, even as all the leaves are settled on the stalk (śankunā sarvāni parṇāni santṛṇṇāny evam omkāraṇa sarvā vāk santṛṇṇa') says the Upanishad, (2,23,3). All expressions are rooted in Om ('tad yathā.)



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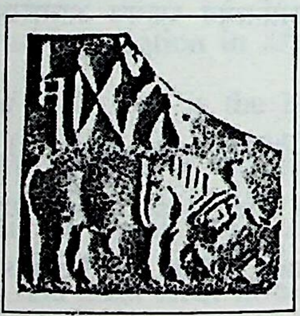
The words 'praṇava' and 'Om' are synonymous. The former word is traced to the root 'ṇu' (stutau) meaning "to praise", "to adore", "to eulogize" ('chhandor ap',3,3,57), to which the prefix 'pra', meaning "well", "perfectly (prakarshēa, 'upasargā iti' ṇutvam', 8,4,14). The perfect devotion here is to the self (pra-ṇūyate stūyate ātmā anena), and praṇava is instrumental to this devotion. All persons intent on salvation resort to this devotion, according to *Skānda-purāṇa* (Kāśi-khanda, pūrvārdha, chap. 73), and this praṇava is superior to all other devices.

प्रणूयते यतः सर्वैः परनिर्वाणकामुकैः ।
सर्वेभ्योऽधिको यस्मत्प्रणवो यः प्रकीर्तितः ॥

There is another word 'tāra', which is employed in texts as synonymous with 'omkāra' (praṇava-paryāya); The etymological meaning of this word also is protection; 'tāra' is so called because it protects one, by taking him across the ocean of this transmigratory ills ('tārayati samsāra-sāgarād iti'; 'taṛati śokam, tarati pāpmānam', hence 'namas tārāya').



The other word (viz.Om) is derived from the root 'av', one of the meanings of which is "to protect" (rakshaṇe). The grammatical involvements are explained thus:

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अव रक्षणेति धातोः । अवतेष्टिलोपश्चेति (उणादिसूत्रेण, १,१४७) । इत्यवतेर्मनूप्रत्ययः । तस्य ज्वरत्वरेत्यादिनोठ् । (उपदावकारयोरेक एव ऊठ् इति।) तयोर्दीर्घकृते गुणः । ततः श्लिष्टोच्चारणमिति प्रक्रियया ओमिति निष्पन्नम् ॥

The root 'av' has as many as nineteen meanings, including 'protection' (rakshaṇa), 'movement' (gati), 'lustre'(kānti), 'love'(prīti); contentment' (tṛpti), 'growth' (vṛddhi), 'prayer'(yāchana), 'acquisition' (avāpti), 'gift' (dāna) and 'entrance' (praveśa). The sense last mentioned has appealed to Ānanda-tīrtha, who explains Om in terms of 'entering into all auspicious attributes' (avati praviśati guṇān') or 'being pervaded by all such attributes' ('avyate viśyate guṇah'). He formulates that Om is none other than Nārāyaṇa himself, who is an the abode of all auspicious traits (*Ṛgbhāshya,* introduction)

ओमशेषगुणाधार इति नारायणोऽप्यसौ ।

Jayatīrtha, his glossator refers to another statement,

ओतत्त्ववाची ह्योंकारः

and explains that Om really means perfection of attributes (guṇa-pūrti-vāchī):

ओंकारो ह्यशेषगुणाधारत्वं वक्ति । तथाभूतश्च परमेश्वर एवेति स एवोंकारार्थः । किञ्च नारायणशब्दो हि भगवति प्रसिद्धः स च तस्य गुणपूर्तिवाची । तत्समाख्यानादोंकारोऽपि तत्पर इति निश्चीयते ॥

The significance of such an explanation is that Om really means Brahman, who is the true import of all the Vedas (sarvaveda-pratipādya). It is not only the position which is in accord with the Upanishadic statements, already cited (like 'omity

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ekāksharam brahma'), but the view held by Patañjali also, when he speaks of praṇava as denotative of īśvara' ('tasya vāchakah praṇavah', *Yoga-sūtra,* 1,27,28) and meant as a tool for concentraction of mind (comm. 'praṇavastasya japah, praṇavābhidheyasya īśvarasya bhāvanam, tasmād asya japatah praṇavārtham chittam ekāgram sampadyate')

There is another interpretation to be found in Tāntrik texts. *Prapañcha-sāra* (mantra-sṛshṭi-prakaraṇa), for instance, tells us that the mantra described as 'parama-hamsa-mantra', viz. soham (meaning He or It is I, identifying the Brahman with Ātman) undergoes a grammatical change (pūrva-śandhi, where 'sa' and 'ha' get omitted) and becomes Om:

योऽयं परमहंसाख्यो मन्त्रः सोऽहमितीरितः ।
सहोर्लोपेऽस्य पूर्वत्वे सन्धावोमिति जायते
अकारश्च तथाकारो मत्कारश्चावत्र वर्णकाः ॥

However, the early and probably most conventional meaning of 'Om' was in the sense of acceptance. When a proposition is made, or a gift given, the listener or the receiver will merely say 'Om' (meaning "I agree", "I accept"). The lexicons also give this meaning (aṅgīkṛti-vāchakatvam, aṅgīkṛtya).

It is more usual to follow the explanation given in *Aitareya-brāhmaṇa* (2,5,7) that Om is the unity of three ingredients 'a', 'u' and 'ma'

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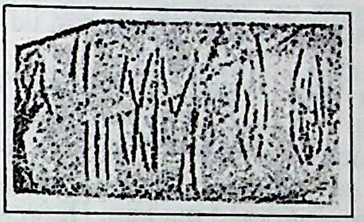
('akāra-ukāra-makāra iti tam ekadhāsamabharat tad etad om iti'): The three units are technically known as mātrās, and are taken to correspond with the three states of individual being: wakefulness (viśva), dream (taijasa) and deep sleep (prājña) (cf *Māṇḍūkyopanishad*). It is to indicate these three divisions in Omkāra that the Vedic notation suggests writing like this:

ओ ३ म् स्मर ।

According to *Paṇinīya-śikshā,* the sound 'a' arises from the throat (kaṇṭha), very first among the sources of sound; there is no articulation prior to this, and therefore it is the first. The sound 'u' has lips (oshṭha) as its organ of origination; and it is the last, as there is no articulation after



that. All the letters (phonemes or syllables) are articulated in between these two. And according to the text cited above, 'ma' is nasal (nāsikya). 'Om', thus originated, is described in the Śikshāvalli of *Taittirīya - upanishad* as the sound expressed over and above the Vedic passages, transcending them, and supreme among them, and assuming all possible forms of speech, being itself immortal and immutable ('yaśchhandasām ṛshabho viśva-rūpah'; 'chhandobhyodhyamṛtāt sambabhūva')

These three mātrās are what are referred to in the Purusha-sūkta (cf *Ṛgveda,* 10,90) as 'tripāt', which

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ascended upwards, ('ūrdhvam ud ait'). They also signify the three Vedic divisions: a-kara (*Ṛgveda*), u-kāra (*Sāma-veda*) and ma-kāra (*Yajurveda*), and the three vyāhṛtis: bhūh, bhuvah and Svah respectively. They also correspond with the three pādas of Gāyatri. When the praṇava is conceived as the divine bird (śyena) that brought the Soma to the world of gods and mortals (cf. the somāharaṇa-prasanga, cf.RV 4,26 and 27; *Aitareya-brāhmaṇa* 5,27 and 13, 25-28; *Taittirīya-samhitā,* 6.1.6.1-3), one of the mātrās (the a-kāra) is its right wing, another (u-kāra) its other wing; the third (ma-kāra) its tail; and the ardha-mātrā (the sound that completes and fulfills the articulation of the three mātrās) the head of the bird:

अकारो दक्षिणः पक्ष उकारस्तूत्तरः स्मृतः ।
मकारं पुच्छमित्याहुरर्धमात्रा तु मस्तकम् ॥

The 'ardha-mātrā' here is also known as 'adhi-mātrā' (above the three mātrās), the fourth mātrā which is the real nature of Brahman. It must be mentioned in this connection that there is also a convention of distinguishing between the praṇava that is conditioned (sopādhika) and the praṇava that is not so conditioned (nirupādhika). While the former answers to the description of 'adhimātrā', the latter is 'amātra' (cf.*Muṇḍaka*, 8,12). If the former is designated as 'brahma' the latter is 'para-brahma' (cf. *Kaṭha,* 1,2,16: *Muṇḍaka,* 2,2,8, and *Praśna,* 5,2); if the former is corporeal (mūrta) and to that extent only apparent or unreal (asatya), the latter is incorporeal

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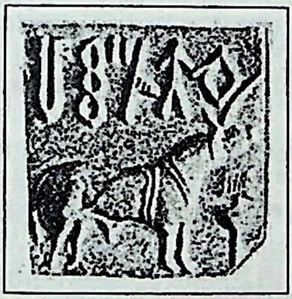
(amūrta) and therefore real (satya) (cf. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka,* 2,3,1). In *Maitrāyaṇī* (6,23), the conditioned praṇava is designated as 'śabda-brahman', whereas the unconditioned is 'para-brahma'.



Prapañcha-sāra (19,36) has a different explanation for the origination of the three mātras. According to this text, the creator extracted from each of the three Vedas a mātrā to condense its essence. From *Ṛgveda* (the first mantra 'agnim īḷe' providing the initial syllable 'a') the first mātrā was obtained; the second mātrā (u) was got from the mantra 'gāvo samudro bandhuh', in *Yajurveda* (the u-kāra was borrowed from the word 'bandhuh', according to the glossator Padmapāda); and the third mātrā (ma-kāra) from the mantra 'aganma jyotir uttamam' in *Sāma-veda.* Manu (276) also has a similar explanation:

अकारं चाप्युकारं च मकारं च प्रजापतिः ।
वेदत्रयान्निरदूहद् भूर्भुवः सुवरिति ॥

There is also an esoteric interpretation of praṇava, attributed to Āñjaneya. The undifferentiated, unitary and spontaneous ejaculation (sphoṭa) is one-lettered signifying protection (avati) and fulfilment (āpnoti). It can be two-lettered when 'o' or 'au'(ओ) and 'm'(म) are distinguished; the first unit signifying pervasion, (ota) and the second accommodation and

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limiting (mita): All things are accommodated within the Brahman, and nothing over-reaches it. Brahman is present in all existence as its very warp and woof. When it is three-lettered (tryakshara), the letters are 'a', 'u' and 'ma' representing creation, preservation and the inseparable union of the two as the third letter. The three letters are implicated in the sphoṭa. There can also be a half-letter (ardha-mātrā) along with these three letters (sārdha-tryakshara), representing the Trivikrama form of Vishnu: 'a' represents the celestial realm, 'u' the mid-region, and 'ma' the earth. The half-letter that brings them together is Vishṇu. If the praṇava stands for the embodied self (śārīraka-jīvātmā), then the first letter signifies the gross body, the second letter the subtle body, and the third letter causal body. The half letter in this case is the soul (jīva). When the praṇava represents the Veda, the three letters represents *Ṛgveda, Yajurveda* and *Sāma-veda* respectively, and the half-letter Veda itself as a composite, unitary canon. Añjaneya's interpretation suggests that the ingredients of the praṇava are 'a'(अ) (standing for the subtle principle or ātmā), 'ha'(ह) (standing for the gross body, prakṛti), and 'am'(अम्) (represents the union of the two). The two halves of the praṇava in effect would be 'aha'(अह) and 'am'(अम्). And by a grammatical rule, 'aha' changes into 'a'(अ) and 'u'(उ), and the requirement of the guṇa-sandhi makes the two combine to form 'o'(ओ). The import of Om therefore is Brahman as conditioned by the phenomenal

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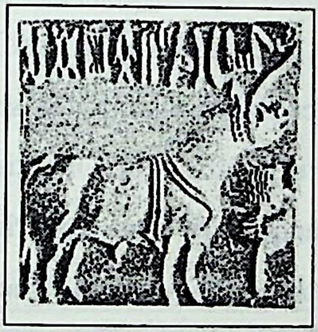
presentation (prakṛti), or Ātman as distinguished by the possession of a body (śarīra). In this case, praṇava is looked upon as four-lettered (chaturakshara).



In *Aitareya-brāhmaṇā* (5,32) the origin of the praṇava is elaborately and differently recounted:

प्रजापतिरकामयत प्रजायेय भूयान्स्त्यामिति । स तपोऽतप्यत । स तपस्तप्त्वा इमाल्लोंकानसृजत । पृथिवीमन्तरिक्षं दिवम् । ताल्लोकानभ्यतपत् । तेभ्योऽभितप्तेभ्यस्त्रीणि ज्योतिंष्यजायन्त । अग्निरेव पृथिव्या अजायत । वायुरन्तरिक्षात् । आदित्यो दिवः । तानि ज्योतीष्यभ्यतपत्तेभ्योऽभितप्तेभ्यस्त्रयो वेदा अजायन्त । ऋग्वेद एव अग्नेरजायत । यजुर्वेदो वायोः । सामवेद आदित्यात् । तान्वेदानभ्यतपत्तेभ्योऽभितप्तेभ्यस्त्रीणि शुक्राण्यजायन्त । भूरित्येव ऋग्वेदादजायत । भुव इति यजुर्वेदात् । स्वरिति सामवेदात् । तानि शुक्राण्यभ्यतपत्तेभ्योऽभितप्तेभ्यस्त्रयो वर्णा अजायन्त । अकार उकारो मकार इति । तानेकधा समभरत् । तदेतदोमोमिति । प्रणौत्योमिति वै स्वर्गो लोकः । आमित्यसौ यौऽसौ तपति ॥

According to this account, Prajāpati, desirous of becoming diverse and manifold, engaged himself in austerities (heating himselfup). By the heat generated thus, he created the three worlds: earth, midregion and sky. Further by the heat of these worlds, three lights were brought forth. These lights were again heated up (by the tapas) and the three Vedas were formed: *Ṛgveda* from Agni, *Yajurveda* from Vāyu and *Sāma-veda* from Āditya. The Vedas, when heated up,

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brought forth the three bright spots of light: Bhūh from *Ṛgveda*, Bhuvah from *yajurveda*, and Svah from *Sāma-veda*. From these spots of light, three phonemes evolved: a.u, and ma. The three occurred conjointly, and that was Om.

We also have in *Maitrī-upanishad* (6,3) an account which speaks of two aspects of Brahman: one with form, and the other without. The former is appearance while the latter is real; the Brahman which is light, the sun. It recognized itself as Om, and structured this self Om into three units. Everything here has this triple detail as its very warp and woof. The self is to be contemplated upon as, and yoked to, Om, which is the sun-god.

द्वे वाव ब्रह्मणो रूपे मूर्तं चामूर्तं च । अथ तदसत्यम् । यदमूर्तं तत्सत्यम् । तद्ब्रह्म तज्ज्योतिः । स आदित्यः । स वा एष ओमित्येतदात्माऽभवत् । स त्रेधात्मानं व्याकुरुत ओमिति तिस्रो मात्रा । एताभिः सर्वमिदमोतं प्रोतं चैवास्मीत्येवं ह्या हैतद्वा आदित्य ओमित्येवं ध्यायत आत्मानं युञ्जीतेति ।

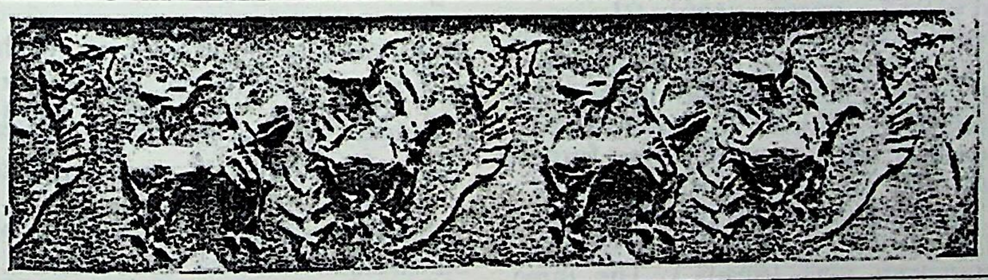
The praṇava is itself regarded as a complete mantra: the seer thereof is Prajāpati; the metrical form (chhandas) is devī-gāyatri; and the devatā is Paramātmā (the supreme spirit). The purpose (viniyoga) is said to be liberation (vimukti-phala-siddhidam).

मन्त्रस्यास्य मुनिः प्रजापतिरथ
च्छन्दश्च देव्यादिका ।
गायत्री गदिता जगत्सु
परमात्माख्यस्तथा देवता ॥

There is also a dhyāna-śloka (verse for contemplation), identifying Omkāra with Vishṇu:

विष्णुं भास्वत्किरीटाङ्गदवलयगला-
कल्पहारोदरांघ्रि -
श्रोणीभूपं सुराजन्मणिमकरमहा -
कुण्डलामण्डिताङ्गम् ।

हस्तोद्यच्चक्रशंखाम्बुजगदममलं
पीतकौशेयवासो -
विद्योतद्भासमुद्यद्दिनकरसदृशं
पद्मसंस्थं नमामि ॥



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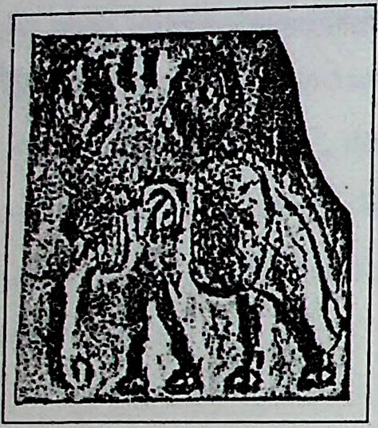
(3) THE VYĀHṚTIS



The gāyatrī-mantra is said to be four-footed (chatushpāda, or having four lines), when praṇava accompanies it; when, however, the praṇava is omitted, it is only three-footed ('chatushpāda-gāyatrī praṇavena saha; praṇavam vīnā tripadā'). The three pādas of the mantra in gāyatri-chhandas, evolve out of the three vyāhṛtis, according to traditional understanding. The three vyāhṛtis are Bhrūh (earth), Bhuvah (mid-region) and Svah (the upper region yonder), which here have their origin in the mātrās of praṇava, a-kāra, u-kāra and ma-kāra respectively.

The expression vyāhṛti (or vyāhāra) literally means a perfect utterance, well-articulated speech, or considered statement. The background myth is that the creator' at the beginning of creation, uttered the ejaculation 'bhūh', and the earth came into existence 'sa bhūr iti vyāharat, sa bhūmim asṛjata'): then he articulated 'bhuvah', and thus brought into being the mid-region ('a bhuva iti vyāharat, sontariksham asṛjata'); and subsequently he uttered 'suvah', and the upper realm got formed ('sa suvah iti vyāharat, sa divam asṛjata'). Thus the three vyāhṛtis correspond with the three worlds ('etā vai

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vyāhṛtaya ime lokāḥ', *Taittiriya-brāhmaṇa*, 2.2.4.2). The vyāhṛti character of the Vyāhṛtis consists in the three worlds being occasioned by the three ejaculations:

इदमेव व्याहृतीनां व्याहृतित्वं
यद्व्याहृतास्वेव व्याहृतिषु
इमे सर्वे लोका अजायन्त ।

The same explanation occurs also in *Yogi-yājñavalkya* (1.9) thus:

भूर्भुवःस्वस्तथा पूर्वं स्वयमेव स्वयंभुवा ।
व्याहृता ज्ञानदेहेन तेन व्याहृतयः स्मृताः ॥

According to *Maitrī-upanishad* (6.6) existence was at first inarticulate. Then Prajāpati (the creator and protector of all existent things and beings) ejaculated after deep contemplation 'bhūh', 'bhuvah' and 'suvah'. This three-fold utterance came to constitute his gross body: 'suvah' became his head (upper organ), 'bhuvah' constituted his navel (middle part) and 'bhūh' his feet (the lower part); these are the three worlds. And the sun became the eyes for them:

अथाव्याहृतं वा इदमासीत् । स सत्यं प्रजापतिः तपस्तप्त्वाऽनुव्याहरत् भूर्भुवःसुवरिति । एषैवास्य प्रजापतेः स्थविष्ठा तनूर्यालोकाविति । स्वरित्यस्य शिरो नाभिर्भुवो भूःपादा आदित्यश्चक्षुः ॥

To these three, *Taittirīya-upanishad* (1.5) adds 'mahah' as the fourth, symbolic of the very Brahman being the inmost self of all beings and having the other vyāhṛtis as but its limbs, and tells us that this is the view of Mahāchamasya:

भूर्भुवःसुवरिति वा एताः तिस्रो व्याहृतयः ।
तासामुहस्मैतां तां चतुर्थीम् ।
महाचमस्यः प्रवेदयते । मह इति तद् ब्रह्म ।
स आत्मा । अङ्गान्यन्या देवताः ।

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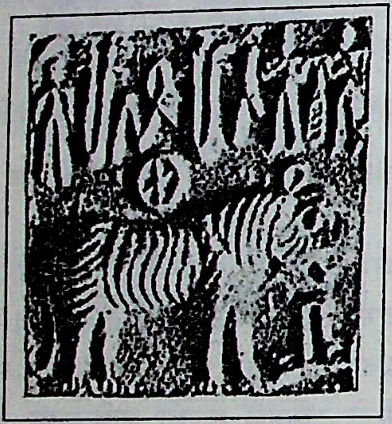
This text provides the following correspondences:



(1) The Lokas:

bhūh-ayam lokah (this world which we see here in front of us)

bhuvah-antariksham (the mid-region)

suvah-asau lokah (the world beyond, up there, yonder)

mahah-āditya (the sun)

(2) The devatā:

bhūh - agni (the fire principle)

bhuvah - vāyu (the principle of wind)

suvah - āditya (the sun)

mahah - chandra (the moon)

(3) The Vedas:

bhūh - Ṛk (the hymnology of *Ṛgveda*)

bhuvah - sāman (the chants of *Sāmaveda*)

suvah - yajus (the sacrificial formulae of *Yajurveda*)

mahah - brahma (the sacrifice)

(4) The Prāṇas:

bhūh - prāṇa (the vital principle; the ascending breath)

bhuvah - āpana (the principle of elimination; the descending breath)

suvah - vyāna (the principle of circulation; the spreading breath)

mahah - anna (food)

[Śamkara comments:
इतराश्च व्याहृतयो लोकाः देवाः वेदाः प्राणाश्च । महः इत्यनेन व्याहृत्या आत्मना आदित्यचन्द्रब्रह्मान्नभूतेन व्याप्यन्ते यतः ॥

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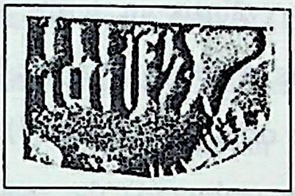

Maitrī upanishad (6,5), which takes the three vyāhṛtis as synonymous with the three mātrās of praṇava, works out further correspondences:

(1) masculine, feminine and neuter (by way of gender) (linga);

(2) Agni, Vāyu and Āditya (by way of lights) (bhāsvat);

(3) Brahmā, Rudra and Vishṇu (by way of overlords)(adhipati):

(4) Gārhaptya, Dakshiṇa and Āhavanīya (by way of fires (makha);

(5) Yajus and Sāman (by way of Knowledge) (vijñāna);

(6) Bhūh, Bhuvah and Suvah (by way of regions) (loka);

(7) past, present and future (by way of time) (kāla);

(8) prāṇa, agni and sūrya (by way of energies) (pratāpa);

(9) food (anna), water (āpa) and moon (by way of satisfactions)(āpyāyana).

(10) buddhi, manas and ahamkāra (by way of consciousness) (chetanā).

(11) prāṇa, apāna and vyāna (by way of vital currents) (prāṇa).

Gāyatrī-tantra (paṭala#2) explains that the first vyāhṛti denotes the power of mental resolution (icchhā-śakti), the second the power of energetic action (Kriyā-śakti), and the third the power of transcendental gnosis (jñāna-śakti). The same text also points out that the first vyāhṛti, bhūh, represents in the organism, the basal lotus or mūlādhāra (below the

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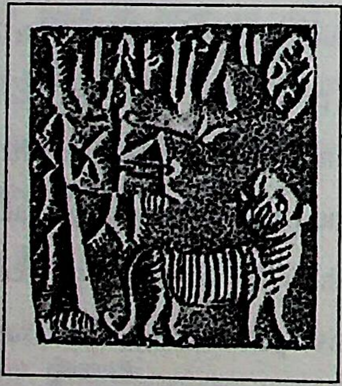
navel) as the chakra; the second vyāhṛti symbolizes the viśuddha-chakra (at the throat), while the third represents the sahasrāra or the thousand-petalled lotus (on top of the head):

भूःकारं तु भूर्लोको भुवर्लोको भुवस्तथा ।
स्वःकारः सुरलोकश्च गायत्र्याः स्थाननिर्णयः ॥
इच्छाशक्तिश्च भूःकारः क्रियाशक्तिर्भुवस्तथा ।
स्वःकारो ज्ञानशक्तिश्च भूर्भुवःस्वः स्वरूपकः ॥
मूलपद्मं च भूर्लोको विशुद्धं च भुवस्तथा ।
सुरलोकः सहस्रारो गायत्रीस्थाननिर्णयः ॥



There are certain correspondences worked out for the three vyāhṛtis in terms of (1) the mātrās of praṇava; (2) the Veda which is the origin or effect; (3) the devatā of the realm; (4) the realm, (5) the providing guṇa of Prakṛti (6) the distinguishing complexion, (7) the deity among the trimūrti (8) the prāṇa (9) the aspect of Brahman, and (10) the existential factor:

I Bhūh : (1) a-kāra : (2) Ṛgveda; (3) Agni ; (4) Pṛthvī (earth) (5) sattva; (6) pīta (or yellow); (7) Brahmā the creator; (8) prāṇa; (9) sat, and (10) pradhāna (matter)

II Bhuvah : (1) u-kāra; (2) Yajurveda or Sāma-veda; (3) Vāyu; (4) antariksha (mid-region); (5) rajas; (6) śukla (white); and (7) Vishṇu; (8) apāna; (9) chit; and (10) purusha (spirit)

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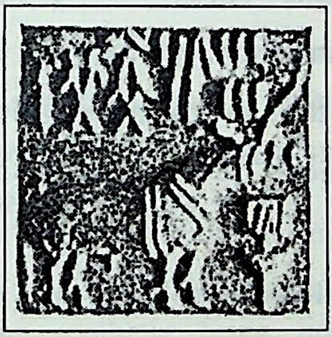
III Suvah (or Svah) : (1) makāra; (2) Sāma-veda or Yajurveda; (3) Sūrya; (4) dyur-loka (sky or upper realm); (5) tamas; (6) kṛshṇa (black) (7) Rudra ; (8) vyāna; (9) ānanda, and (10) kāla (time)



The Vyāhṛtis as representing the lokas (the worlds, the realms, the regions) are of two kinds: The three vyāhṛtis mentioned above (viz. bhūh, bhuvah and suvah) are known as mahāvyahṛtis, for they are the fundamental realms, universally accepted and directly involved in the Gāyatri-mantra; they are also the vyāhṛtis mentioned in the early texts. But the lokas in Indian tradition are fourteen in number; seven of them above are known as vyāhṛtis; and these include the three mahāvyahṛtis mentioned above. The other four are 'mahah' (above the suvah), 'janah', 'tapah' and 'satyam' in the ascending-order. These are the areas of the cosmic spirit (virāḍ-purusha), his limbs as it were. We read in *Nādabindūpanishat* that 'bhūh' as a loka represents the feet of this cosmic person, 'bhuvah' is settled in his knees, 'suvah' in his loins, 'mahah' in his navel, 'janah' in his heart, 'tapah' in his throat and 'satya' in the midpoint of his forehead:

भूर्लोकः पादयोस्तस्य भुवर्लोकस्तु जानुनि ।
सुवर्लोकः कटीदेशे नाभिदेशे महर्जगत् ।
जनोलोकस्तु हृद्देशे कण्ठे लोकस्तपस्ततः ।
भ्रुवोर्ललाटमध्ये तु सत्यलोको व्यवस्थितः ॥

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Although the seven vyāhṛtis are intended to represent distinct lokas or realms of normal and supernormal experience, convention insists that the utterance of each of the vyāhṛtis must follow the utterance of Om. This is to suggest that the lokas are not different from Om, which is the symbol of supreme reality.

सप्तव्याहृतयः सप्तलोकाः भूरादयः क्रमात् ।
प्रत्येकं प्रणवादित्वात् तन्मया इति सूच्यते ॥

The lokas are merely aspects of Brahman. If there are seven different vyāhṛtis, there are seven Omkāras, or rather the same Omkāra repeated seven times. The vyāhṛtis, in other words, are just explications of praṇava. Jayatīrtha, the glossator Ānanda-tīrtha's *Ṛgbhāshya* quotes an ancient statement 'praṇavārthā vyāhṛtayah', meaning that the import of the praṇava constitute the vyāhṛtis. The vyāhṛtis have their own devātās, who are all identical with the Brahman, symbolized by Om ('bhūlokādyabhimāninyo devatāh omkārārtha-brahmaikyena stūyante')

Prapañcha-sāra, which is primarily a tāntrik text brings out the intimate relationship between the praṇava and the vyāhṛtis. The first mātrā of praṇava is the first of the vyāhṛtis (bhūh), the second of the mātrās is also the second vyāhṛti (bhuvah); and the mātrā 'ma' is the

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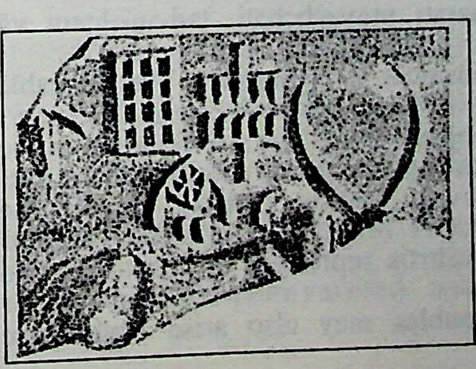
vyāhṛti 'svah'. The bindu, which is the, ardha-mātrā (or adhimātrā), is the vyāhṛti 'mahah'; 'janah' is the nāda (sound); 'tapah' is śakti (power, energy), and 'satyam' is the transcendental peace; the highest state:

प्रणवस्य व्याहृतीनां अन्तः संबन्ध उच्यते ।
अकारो भूरुकारस्तु भुवो मार्णः स्वरीरितः ॥
बिन्दुर्महस्तथा नादो जनः शक्तिस्तपः स्मृतम् ।
शान्तिः सत्यमिति प्रोक्तं सत् तत् परतरं पदम् ॥

The vyāhṛtis bring out the aspects of Brahman that are suitable for contemplation: Om (prefect, pūrṇa), bhūh (eternal and inmutable, nitya), bhuvah (creator, sṛshṭi-kartā), svah (independent, svatantra), mahah (adorable, mahanīya), janah (devoid of birth etc, aja), tapah (illumination, light, jñāna-prakāśa) and satyam (the regulator of worthy souls, niyāmaka). Convention regards each of the vyāhṛtis as a mantra in its own right. The seers of these mantras are Atri, Bhṛgu, Kutsa, Vasishṭha, Gautama, Kāśyapa and Āṅgirasa, respectively. The metrical forms (chhandas) of these mantras are gāyatri, ushṇik, anushṭup, bṛhatī, paṅkti', trishṭup and jagatī in order. And the devatās are Agni, Vāyu, Arka (Sūrya), Vāgīśa (Bṛhaspati), Varuṇa, Indra and Viśvedevāh for the mantras respectively. For the praṇava, Brahmā is given as the seer, gāyatrī as the metrical form, and Paramātmā as the devatā.

प्रणवे ब्रह्मर्षिः प्रोक्तश्छन्दो गायत्रमुच्यते ।
परमात्मा देवताऽयं मोक्षादौ विनियोगः ॥



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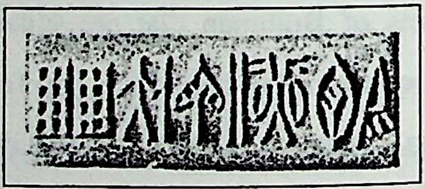
With regard to the "viniyoga' (or purpose), the word 'vyāhṛti' is explained in this way; the root of the word is 'hṛ' which means 'to provide (harati, prayachchhati) or to eliminate or obviate (harati, nāśayati'). Its prefix 'ā' joined with the root emphasizes the sense of 'bringing (āharati); and the other prefix 'vi' signifies 'variously' (vividham). Thus, the word signifies the means of fully securing the desires of the devotee, which may be manifold, or the means of getting rid of the evils that besiege the devotee from all sides ('sādhakshṭam vividham, 'āsamantāt, harati prayachchati, tad-anishṭam vā nāśayati iti vyāhṛtih'). The desirable objectives for one's welfare are in the seven worlds (lokas), which the vyāhṛtis represent; the obstacles and troubles may also arise from these worlds. The employment of the vyāhṛtis (viniyoga) includes the attainment of the three values of life; worldly prosperity (artha); fulfilment of desires (kāma) and righteous living with restraint and wisdom (dharma). But the highest value of life, according to traditional reckoning, is liberation from all ills of life (moksha); and contemplation on the vyāhṛtis as identical with the praṇava is intended to secure this ultimate value.



(1) BHŪH

The first of the vyāhṛtis, 'bhūh' is etymologically explained as that from which all things and beings are produced ('bhavatah kvipi bhūr iti

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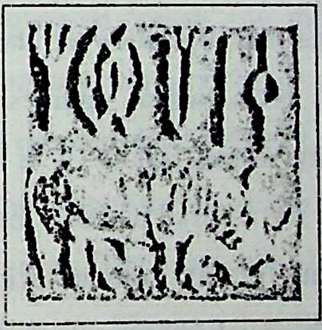
rūpam'; yad vā bhavanty asmād bhūtanī ti"; bhūḥ adhikaraṇe kvip), or that in which all beings abide or dwell (bhavanti asyām bhūtāni). It is in this sense that *Parāśara-smṛti* says:

भवन्ति चास्मिन् भूतानि स्थावराणि चराणि च ।
तस्माद् भूरिति विज्ञेया प्रथमा व्याहृतिः स्मृता ॥

The word 'bhūḥ' thus represents this world (bhūrloka), which produces and harbours all phenomena (sakala-jagad-utpādakatvād bhūḥ) or it refers to the infinite wealth and power that it contains (niravadhikaiśvarya-yuktatvād vā). Ānanda-tīrtha takes this vyāhṛti to denote the perfection of Brahman, who is symbolized by the praṇava (om bhūḥ). Jayatīrtha, his glossator, explains that the root 'bhū' signifies plenitude or immeasurable fullness or perfection ('bhū bahau bahu-pūrṇatāyām'). Śrīnīvāsa-tīrtha justifies this explanation thus:

पूर्णत्वरूप वहुत्वार्थकस्य भूधातोः । क्विप् प्रत्यये तस्य सर्वस्यापि लोपे भूरित्येवं रूपं द्रष्टव्यम् । पूर्णत्वस्यैवैश्वर्यरूपत्वादित्यर्थः ॥ भूधातोर्भावे औणादिके डुप्रत्यये डकारलोपे डिति परे टिभूतस्य डकारस्य लोपे भू उ भू इति रूपम् । अन्तलोप इति रकारस्थस्याकार लोपेऽत्यर्थः ॥



(2) BHUVAH

The second mahāvyāhṛti, 'bhuvah' emphasizes the production and maintenance of all things and beings ('bhāvayati sthāpayati viśvam iti'; 'antar-bhāvitaṇyarthād asuni

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guṇābhāvaś chhāndasah'). Some authorities restrict the meaning to creation of the worlds ('bhāvanāt jagad-utpādanāt bhuvah); bhavatar eva antarṇitaṇyarthasya ka-pratyaye rūpam). A third interpretation (given by Sāyaṇa) points out that this vyāhṛti symbolizing the mid-region or antariksha provides the field for existence and operation of the first vyāhṛti, bhūh, which signifies earth ('bhavaty asmin jagat'). It is space which not only makes for the possibility of all material existence but illumines also the material objects ('bhāvayati prakāśayati viśvam avakāśa-pradānena sthiti-pradānena iti vā'; bhuvontar bhāvitaṇyarthād asuni guṇābhāvaś chhāndasah uvaṅgādeśah) *(Taittirīya - sandhyā - bhāshya)* *Parāśara-Smṛti* points out that this vyāhṛti it is that produces all beings and things, and maintains them till the end of the aeon; and when the things and beings are destroyed, this vyāhṛti again produces them:

भवन्ति भूयो भूतान्युपभोगक्षये पुनः ।
कल्पान्ते उपभोगाय भुवस्तस्मात्प्रकीर्तिता ।

Ānanda-tīrtha takes this vyāhṛti in the sense of infinity (ananta). The implication of this interpretation is that the first vyāhṛti, which signifies perfection (pūrṇa) is surpassed by this vyāhṛti which suggests 'eminence' or supremacy ('bhūr bhūtis tasyā vara iti vā; bhūh pūrṇah, vo varah, niradhika-śreshṭhah'). Again, the Brahman (Om) who is symbolized by 'perfection' (Om bhūh) is again symbolized by infinity (Om bhuvah). Jayatīrtha, the glossator of Ānanda-tīrtha, justifies this position: 'bhavater

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auṇādika ḍu-pratyayah; vara-śabdasyānta-lopah' (Śrīnivāsa-tīrtha's annotation: "tathā cha bhuvar iti jāte visarge cha sati bhuva iti rūpam bhavati')

(3) SVAH (or SUVAH)

There are two forms for this vyāhṛti: 'svah' and 'suvah', and both are acceptable. The former is adopted by the Ṛgvedins ('svar iti ṛgvedinām pāṭhah'), and is indication of bliss ('svas śabdo hi sukha-vāchī). 'Svah' (or svar) signifies, according to Yāska (2,14), Āditya (sun), who moves according to an impeccable order ('su araṇah') or who prompts everything to move in an orderly fashion ('su īraṇah). The expression is derived from the root 'ṛ', which means 'to move' (gatau), and with the prefix 'su', means 'moving well or perfectly' (svar īra galau, yaṇ; su+ar+yan. 'su-purvād arter iyater vā', Nirukta 2,13). The expression 'suvah', on the other hand, means what is truly to be adored, or to be sought after in earnest ('sushṭhu varaṇīyatvāt suvah'), and this is gnosis. The expression signifies, according to Sāyaṇa, the Brahman that is to be attained for the sake of the bliss that there is iṇ it ('sushṭhu araṇīyam prāpyam suvah, sukham asmin prāpyata iti', *Taittirīya-sandhyā-bhāshya*).

Ānanda-tīrtha takes this vyāhṛti to signify the unique bliss (ānanda).

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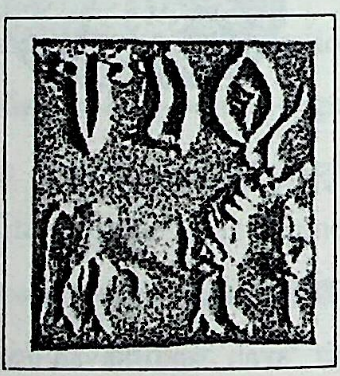
that is the greatest blessing one can expect from Godhead ('sukha-rūpatvāt svah'), when it is recited as 'suvah', it signifies, according to Jayatīrtha absolute auspiciousness (su) and infinite happiness (va) ('su śobhanam, vah sukham; yasya śobhanatā cha sukhasya anantatayā ityananta-sukhāt suvah'). The happiness or bliss here includes what is good for the bodily organs and sense-faculties ('sukham kasmāt ? suhitam khabhyah'). The two letters in the word (su-va), signifying the greatest blessing (śobhana, viz.jñāna) and incomparable bliss (ānanda), are also imagined as the two feet of the iconic representation of God :

स्वित्यानन्दः समुद्दिष्टो वरिति ज्ञानमुच्यते ।
मुक्तिदानेन तद्दानात्सुवरस्य पदद्वयम् ॥

Parāśara-smṛti means by this vyāhṛti (sva) the svargaloka, the upper realm or the heaven, from whence the earth secures warmth, coolness, rains and sunlight; and where the good folk reside :

शीतोष्णवृष्टितेजांसि जायन्ते तानि वै सदा ।
आलयः सुकृतीनां च स्वर्लोकः स उदाहृतः ॥



(4) OTHER VYĀHṚTIS

These three are regarded as 'mahāvyāhṛtis', for they are employed without fail in all ritual sequences ('ādyas tisro mahā proktāh sarvatraiva

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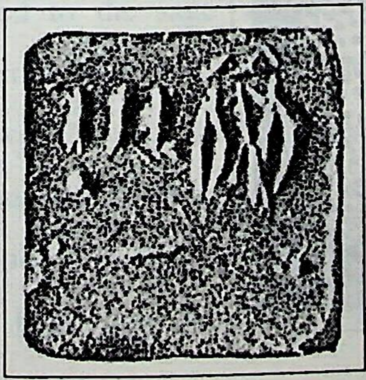
niyojanāt'), and the other four are mere vyāhṛtis. 'Mahah' is so called because it represents the adorable loka (maha pūjāyām), the realm higher than the 'svah' and sought after by all those who aspire for liberation. 'Janah' signifies the realm from which ākāśa and other elements originate (jana janane; karturyasun). 'Tapas' is the realm from which all thoughts arise (tapa ālochane), and which represents enlightenment, omniscience and power. 'Satya' is what does not alter in space or time, which is immutable, and which is the highest and true bliss and liberating knowledge



('sachchhabda uttamam brūyād ānandam iti vai vadet, yeti jñānam samuddishṭam').

The following excerpt from *Śāradātilaka-tantra* gives the details of the seven vyāhṛtis involved in the gāyatri-mantra:

प्रणवाद्या व्याहृतयः सप्त स्युस्तत्पदादिकाः ।
चतुर्विंशत्यक्षरात्मा गायत्रीशिरसान्विता ।
सर्ववेदोद्धृतः सारो मन्त्रोऽयं समुदाहृतः ॥

(For praṇava)-

ब्रह्मा देव्यादिगायत्री परमात्मा समीरितः ।
ऋष्याद्याः प्रणवस्यैते मुनिभिः परिकीर्तिताः ॥

(For vyāhṛtis)

ṛshis:

जमदग्निभरद्वाज भृगुगौतमकाश्यपान् ।
विश्वामित्र वसिष्ठाख्यौ व्याहृतीनां ऋषीन् विदुः॥

Chhandas:

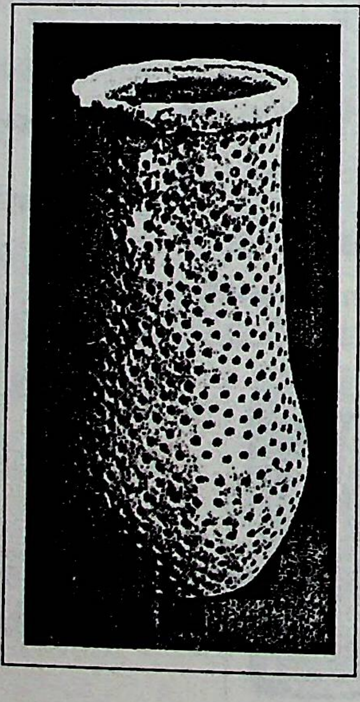
गायत्र्युष्णिगथानुष्टुब् बृहती पंक्तयः पुनः ।
त्रिष्टुब्जगत्यौ छन्दांसि कथितानि मनीषिभिः ॥

devatā:

सप्तार्चिरनिलं सूर्यो वाक्पतिर्वरुणो वृषः ।
विश्वेदेवाः क्रमादासां देवताः परिकीर्तिताः ॥

In *Meru-tantra*, the seven vyāhṛtis are ritualistically prescribed to be placed on the limbs of the devotee thus :

व्याहृतिः सप्त भूराद्या हन्मुखांसोरुयुग्मके ।
जठरे च क्रमात् न्यसेन्न्यासोऽयं प्रथमः स्मृतः ॥
पादांगुल्याग्रसन्धौ च सन्धौ स्याद् गुल्फपादयोः ।
गुल्फजान्वोस्तथा सन्धौ तथा जानूरुसन्धिषु ।
लिङ्गे नाभौ च हृदये कण्ठे वर्णान् न्यसेत क्रमात् ॥



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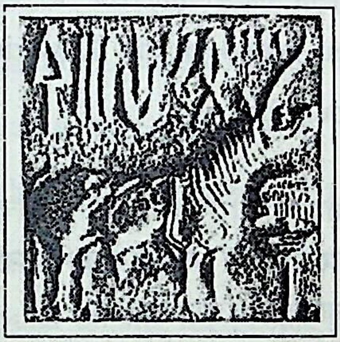
(4) THE GĀYATRĪ MANTRA



The ṛshi of this mantra is Viśvāmitra; the devatā is Savitṛ; and the chhandas gāyatrī. This is the tenth mantra in the sixty-second sūkta of the third maṇḍala of *Ṛgveda*. This sūkta comprises of eighteen mantras, and constitutes the last sūkta in the third maṇḍala, the whole of which is ascribed to the sage Viśvāmitrā. The mantras 10 to 12 are dedicated to the devatā Savitṛ, while the others have Indrāvaruṇau, Bṛhaspati, Pūshā, Soma and Mitrāvaruṇau as the devatās. Excepting the first three mantras in this sūkta (which are in the trishṭup-chhandas), the chhandas of the sūkta is gayatrī. While the seer for the entire sūkta is given as 'gāthino viśvāmitrah', the last three mantras are alternately ascribed to the sage Jamadagni.

Viśvāmitra is among the most celebrated sages of the country. He is the ancestor of many families that have continued to this day. Many brāhmaṇa families trace their lineage (gotra-pravara) from this sage and his descendents Madhuchhandas Aghamarshaṇa, Kauśika, Devarāta and others. He figures prominently in the epics (*Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata*) and in the purāṇas. However, most of the accounts pertaining to him in these works is in the nature of fanciful legends, which are not relevant in the

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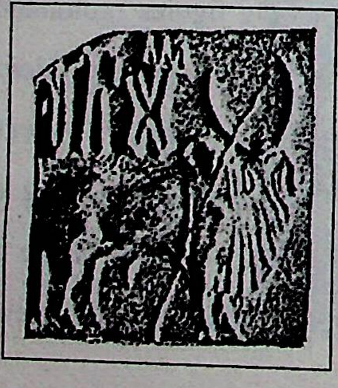
context of *Ṛgveda*. All that we glean from the Vedic sources is that he belonged to the Gāthi lineage, that he was a contemporary of another illustrious sage Vasishṭha (who is the seer of as many as 104 sūktas in *Ṛgveda*), and that he adopted Śunahśepa-ājīgarti (to whom the hymns 24 to 30 in the first maṇḍala and the third hymn in the ninth maṇḍala in *Ṛgveda* are ascribed) as his son (hence described as 'kṛtrima vaiśvāmitro-devarātah'). Viśvāmitra himself is the seer of forty-six entire sūktas and a number of other mantras in *Ṛgveda-samhitā*.



The *Sarvānukramaṇī* of Śaunaka gives in the prelude to the third maṇḍala the following details about the seer:

कुशिकस्त्वौषीरथिरिन्द्रतुल्यं पुत्रमिच्छन् ब्रह्मचर्यं चचार । तस्येन्द्र इव पुत्रो जज्ञे गाथिनो विश्वामित्रः । स तृतीयं मण्डलमपश्यत् ॥

The information given in *Mahābhārata* (anuśāsana-parva, dānadharma-parva, adhyāya 4) corroborates with this details and provides some more particulars. The *Anukramaṇī* merely mentions that Kuśika-aushīrathi desired a son who would be as mighty as Indra and performed austerities for this reason; and his desire was fulfilled when Viśvāmitra was born to him. The epic traces Viśvāmitra's lineage to Bharata (bharatānvaya), after whom an entire tribe was named. It was a Kshatriya

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family, ruling over Kānyakubja. The ancestors of Viśvāmitra in that line were Ajamīḍha, Jahnu, Sindhu-dvīpa (who was a sage and a seer in his own right), Balākāśva (reputed as a royal sage, 'rājarshi'), Vallabha (who was popular among the people as the very incarnation of righteousness, 'dharma, 'ivāparah') Kuśa-ushīratha and Kusika-aushīrathi, (who was also Gāthi). This Kuśika was valourous like Indra himself ('sahasrāksha-dyuti), but retired to a jungle-retreat for performing austerities. It was in this retreat that Viśvaratha (who later became famous as Viśvāmitra) was born. A daughter was also born to him, Satyavatī by name; and she married the sage Ṛchīka, son of the well-known sage Chyavana of the Bhārgava clan.

Viśvaratha, although scion of a royal family, preferred the life of a sage, and became a seer of mantras; he then became known as Viśvāmitra. His son Madhuchchhandas was also a sage of renown; and the very first sūkta of *Ṛgveda* is credited to his vision. He is the seer for the first hundred and two mantras, and is therefore described as a 'śatarchina'. Viśvāmitra's descendents were also some of them eminent sages. Among them were Akshīṇa (Aghamarshaṇa), Śakunta, Babhru, Yajñavalkya, Ulūka, Saindhavāyana, Gālava, Vajra, Sālaṅkāyana, Nārada, Vaksho-grīva, Naika-dṛk, Aśvalāyana, Jābāli, Suśruta, Karīshi, Kapila, Sūta, Samśrutya, Bābhravāyaṇī, Bhūti, Chāmpeya, Seyana, Hiraṇyāksha, Ūrjayoni, and Udāpekshi.

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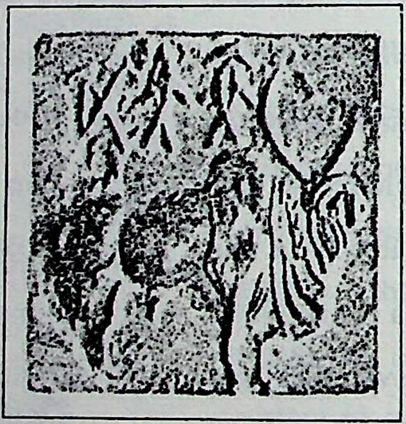
The gāyatri-mantra that he envisioned is celebrated as Viśvāmitra-gāyatri. This form is distintuished by the accompaniment of the vyāhṛtis (bhuh, bhuvah and suvah) at the beginning, as distinct from Brahma-gāyatri, which is bereft of the vyāhṛtis.



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The mantra in Ṛgveda-samhitā (3,62,10) reads:

SAMHITĀ - PĀṬHA

तत्सवितुवरेण्यं

भर्गो देवस्य धीमहि ।

धियो यो नः प्रचोदयात् ॥

Gāyatrī-sāra-samgraha identifies the twenty-four letters of the mantra with dieties presiding over the letters (abhimāni-devatā) and names of Vishṇu:

1.	त	Agni	Keśava
2.	त्स	Prajāpati	Nārāyaṇa
3.	वि	Soma	Mādhava
4.	तु	Īśāna	Govinda
5.	र्व	Savitṛ	Vishṇu
6.	रे	Bṛhaspati	Madhusūdana
7.	णि	Paitṛ-deva	Trivikrama
8.	यं	Bhaga	Vāmana
9.	भ	Aryamā	Śrīdhara
10.	र्गो	Sāvitri	Hṛshīkeśa
11.	दे	Tvashtṛ	Padmanābha
12.	व	Pūshan	Dāmodara
13.	स्य	Indra	Samkarshaṇa

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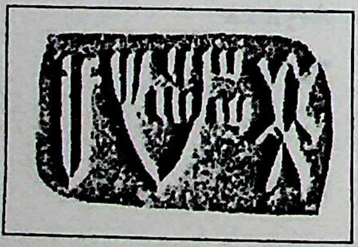
14.	धी	Agni	Vāsudeva
15.	म	Vāyu	Pradyumna
16.	हि	Mitrā - Varuṇa	Aniruddha
17.	धि	Bhrātṛdeva	Purushottama
18.	यो	Viśvedeva	Adhokshaja
19.	यो	Vishṇu	Nārasiṁha
20.	नः	Vāsava	Achyuta
21.	प्र	Tushṭaba	Janārdana
22.	चो	Kubera	Upendra
23.	द	Dasra	Hari
24.	यात्	Brahma	Śrī-Kṛishṇa

Gāyatri-tantra (1,214) insists that each letter must be contemplated upon:

वर्णानां चिन्तनं ध्यानं सम्यक् पापप्रणाशनम् ॥

This mantra has Savitṛ as its devatā.



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PADA - PĀṬHA

तत् । सवितुः । वरेण्यम् । भर्गः । देवस्य । धीमहि ।
धियः । यः । नः । प्रऽचोदयात् ॥

[The Sāman reading, called Gāyatra-sāma from Kauthuma-śākhā:

ओं तत्सवितुर्वरेणियों
भार्गो देवस्य धीमाहीऽ२
धियो यो नः प्रचोऽ१२१२हीं आऽ२
दायो आऽ३४५ ॥

(RV 7,36, and beginning with savitr, RV 7,37,8 and 38)

The chhandas of the mantra is gāyatri, which has twenty-four letters (akshara or phonemes, varṇa) arranged in three lines, each of which has eight letters. But the first line has only seven letters. So the last letter 'ṇyam' is split into two letters, in accordance with a grammatical provision 'vlaṅg sambhaktauṇya-prātyayah' ('iṇ' is the dhātu, vara-iṇyam as chhāndasa-lakshaṇa) (cf. also Patañjali (*Mahābhāshya*, 6,4,76 अचिश्नु धातुभ्यां य्वोरिय ङुवङौ ॥ explained as follows: इयङादि प्रकरणे तन्वादीनामुपसंख्यानं कर्तव्यम् ॥ e.g. तन्वं पुषेम read as तनुवं पुषेम । Likewise, the third line ends with 'yāt', which is taken as one letter ('ta' is ākhyāta or ach-pratyaya and therefore not counted as a separate letter)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
त	त्स	वि	तु	र्व	रे	णि	यं
भ	र्गो	दे	व	स्य	धी	म	हि
धि	यो	यो	नः	प्र	चो	द	यात्

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ADHIYAJÑA

This mantra is required to be recited on the sixth day of the ten-day ritual known as daśa-rātra, a variety of Soma-yāga (saumika, one of the three principal varieties of sacrificial rituals, the other two being ishṭi and paśu). The recitation is in the course of Vaiśvadeva-śastra; (RV 7,36, and beginning with Savitṛ, RV 7,37,8 and 38) the two mantras recited include this mantra as well of the following (11th 'devasya savitur vayam'), in accordance with the prescription in *Āśvalāyana-śrauta-sūtra* (8,1):

तत्सवितुर्वरेण्यमिति द्वे दोषो आगात् ॥

These two mantras are also recited on the second day of the rituals knows as abhiplaya, shashṭyah and shaḍaha (in the course of Vaiśvadeva - śastra) (cf. *Āśvatlāyana - śrauta-sūtra* 7,6 'tat savitur-varēṇyam iti dve ā viśvadevam').

Savitṛ, the solar deity is identified ritualistically with Agni as well as Sūrya ('agnir jyotih jyotis sūryah svāhā). This deity is invoked in the course of the ritual to purify the water meant for ceremonial sprinkling (prokshaṇe), kept in the vessel called agnihotra-havaṇī (*Taittirīya-samhitā,* 7,2,5 'devo vah savitotpunātu'), or to prevent the offering in the form of powder (pishṭa), poured on the deer-skin, from getting blown away (*ibid*, 5,8 'devo vas savitā hiraṇya-pāṇih pratigṛhṇātu'). This deity is invoked also for the successful completion of

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sacrificial ritual being performed by the devas (*ibid*, 1,1,12 'devasya savitā hvayati deva-yajyāyai'). He it is that facilitates the performance of all ritual actions (ibid, 1,1,9 'devasya savituh save karma kṛṇvanti', where the expression 'sava' is in the sense of 'sati', "there being the presence of the god Savitṛ, all actions are done"). And all ritualistic praise becomes great and effective when addressed to the all-knowing Savitr, the one god that is (ibid., 1,2,13 'vayunāvid eka in mahī devasya savituh parishṭutih'). Savitṛ in the context of sacrificial performances is the inner controller (antaryāmi) and prompter (preraka) dwelling in the heart of the sacrificing priest (adhvaryu), as well as the inspirer and purifier of all things on earth.

Savitṛ is the deity who is frequently invoked in the fire-ritual known as agnishṭoma, which follows the course of the year. During this ritual, the cake-offering called puroḍāśa is specially made over to Savitṛ in twelve kapālas, representing the twelve months of the year (cf. *Śatapatha-brāhmaṇa*, 12,7,2,19 'dvādaśa-kapālah sāvitro bhavati; dvādaśa vai māsāh samvatsarasya'; also *Taittirīya-samhitā*, 1,8,10,1 'savitre satyaprasavāya puroḍāśam dvādaśa-kapālam āśūnām vīhiṇām). In fact, the dvādaśāha-sacrifice (which is a satra) is the prototype of the year

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(Taittirīya-brāhmaṇa, 1,1,6,7 'samvatsara-pratimā vai dvādasa-rātrayah') and is conducted at the end of the year; the gods are supposed to take up residence here in this period. The Vaiśvadeva-śastra begins with the adoration of the deity Savitṛ with the offering of a graha for him (sāvitra-graha), where all the seasons of the year are represented (cf. *Śatapatha-brāhmaṇa*, 4,4,1,3 'esha vai savitā ya esha tapati; esha veva sarva-ṛtavas tad ṛtavah samvatsarah') In the aśvamedha-sacrifice oblations to Savitṛ are offered every day of the entire year.

The yājñikas conceived Savitṛ as a visible representation of the year. In the centre of the place assigned for uttara-vedi on the sacrificial ground, a peg is driven on the earth, and a circle is drawn around this peg, the size of a normal chariot-wheel. This circle represents Savitṛ ('sarvatah parimaṇḍalam ṛatha-chakra-mātram savitaram parilikhya'). And the construction of the altar involves the bricks (ishṭakas), symbolic of fifteen days of the pūrva-paksha (the first half of the month) or of the apara paksha (the latter fortnight), or directly twelve earlier and later fortnights.

Savitṛ is also involved in the Soma-sacrifices, where he is invoked to inspire the stones used in crushing the Soma-leaves to produce in profusion the ritual-juice (10,175,1), and alongside this impelling the inert stone, is also a prayer to inspire the priest who is engaged in this task (ibid., 4)

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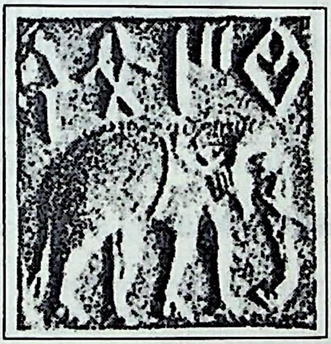
प्र वो ग्रावाणः सविता देवः सुवतु धर्मणा
धूर्षु युज्यध्वं सुनुतः ॥

and

ग्रावाणः सविता नु वो देवः सुवतु धर्मणा
यजमानाय सुन्वते ॥



It may also be mentioned here that Savitṛ is the deity who is especially associated with all sacrificial acts (RV 4,54,2 and 3,54,11). *Śatapatha-brāhmaṇa* (6,3,1,19-210 identifies Savitṛ with the sun-god Āditya, and describes him as the impeller or inspirer of all effective rituals :

असौ वा आदित्यो देवः सविता यदु वा एष यज्ञियं कर्म प्रणयति तदनार्तगं् स्वस्त्युदृचमश्नुते देवाव्यमिति यो देवानवदित्ये तत्सखविदगँ् सत्राजितं धनजितगं् स्वर्जितमिति य एतत्सर्वं विन्दादित्ये तदृचेत्यृचा स्तोमगं् समर्धय गायत्रेण रथन्तरं बृहद्गायत्रवर्तनीति सामानि स्वाहेति ॥

This is a prayer to Savitṛ to expedite and lead to early and successful completion of the ritual that is undertaken ; and is preceded by the formula in *Vājasaneyi-saṃhitā* (11,7) :

इमं नो देव सवितर्यज्ञं प्रणयेति ॥

Savitṛ is the chief of all the rituals that the gods and human beings engage themselves in ; for he purifies the mind of the performers and impells them to move along in the right direction. It is he who gives the command for sacrificial offerings to

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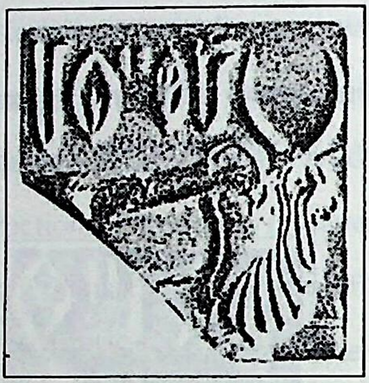
be made three times during the day, and rules over the 'vidatha' in whose sacrificial jurisdiction (sava) all the gods rejoice (RV 3,54,11 'hiraṇya-pāṇih savitā su-jihvas trir ādivo vidatha patyamānah'). He is himself looked upon as a sacrificer (celestial householder, kartṛ) and also as a prompter and impeller (chodayitṛ). All the gods follow him (cf.RV 2,38,9; 5,81,3; and 10,100,1 'devebhir nas savitā prāvatu')

The sacrificial rites are said to take place only at the command of thid deity ('devasya savituh prasave'), who is implored to accomplish the enterprise successfully (*Taittirīya-samhitā,* 4,1,1);

युक्त्वाय मनसा देवान् ...
सविता प्र सुवति तान् ...
देवः सवितः प्र सुव यज्ञं,
प्र सुव यज्ञपतिं भगाय ।
इमं नो देव सवितर्यज्ञं प्र सुव देवयुवं ... ।



ADHI-DAIVATA

The deity Savitṛ is in the Ṛgvedic hymns (especially in 5,81 and 82 and 4,53) identified with Agni as well as Sūrya. Savitṛ is sometimes described as the uplifted rays of the sun (as in 4,13,2 'ūrdhvam bhānum savitā devo aśred') or the ascending flames of Agni (as in 4,6,2 'ūrdhvam ketum'). In *Śatapatha-brahmāṇa* (5,3,1,7), Savitṛ is the progenitor of all the gods ('savitā vai devānām pra-savitā); also in *Taittirīya samhitā,* 1,1,9

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'savitā vai devānām prasavitedam'). The ṛbhūs who receive adoration and oblation in the course of the Vaiśva-deva-śastra where the pitṛ-devatās or the manes and the Viśvedevas including Savitṛ and ṛbhus are invoked) explained as the rays of the sun. They are assigned to the third savana in agnishṭoma-ritual, where Savitṛ receives a graha-offering in the company of their disciples (contevāsa) the ṛbhus. It is only impelled by Savitṛ that the gods are said to have prepared the third savana (*Aitareya-brāhmaṇa*, 3,29). Savitṛ thus is not only a god of light, but a vivifier and impeller.

It is interesting to note that Savitṛ is also associated with the cult of manes. The Vaiśvadeva-śastra in honour of Savitṛ makes the first offering to the manes (pitṛ-devatā, ancestral spirits). RV (10,17,4) speaks of the god Savitṛ as looking after the spirits of departed good folk.

य यत्रासते सुकृतो यत्र ते ययु -
स्तत्र त्वा देवः सविता दधातु ।

Atharvaveda (12,2,40) describes Savitṛ as the ship for the departing spirits:

आ रोहत रपवितुर्नावमेतं
षाड्भिरुर्वीभिरमतिं तरेम ।

The expression 'amati' (meaning manifestation, image, vision, likeness,

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form, cf *Nighaṇṭu*, 3,7, 'rūpam') is often used exclusively with Savitṛ. (cf. RV 3,38,8; 7,38,1 and 2; 7,45,3). Savitṛ is thus the visible representation of divine power, force and majesty. He is in this sense closely associated with Tvashṭṛ, the fashioner of all forms, and with Viśvakarmā, the maker of all things. Yāska interestingly includes Savitṛ among the divinities of the middle realm (madhyama-sthāna) and also among those of the upper realms (dyus-sthāna). In the former case, he is classed among Tvashṭṛ, Viśvakarma, Tārkshya, Agni, Prajāpati and Ahirbudhnya (cf. *Nirukta* to, 3 and 4). In the latter case, he is mentioned alongside Sūrya, Vishṇu, Varuṇa, Vaiśvānara, Āditya and Viśvedevas (ibid, 12, 2-4).

Yāska explains that the word Savitṛ has the major meaning of 'progenitor of all things' (*Nirukta*, 10,31 'savitā sarvasya prasavitā'. The root of the word 'shū' is taken in the sense of procreation and power ('prasavaiśvaryayah'); the dhātu gets the tṛnpratyaya and thus has the avādeśa-guṇa). Yāska 'illustrates the meaning in terms of 'dadhikrāh', who, like Sūrya, pervades, spreads and holds the different things and beings. He cites RV (10,149,1) to the effect that Savitṛ, as the devatā of the middle region, holds in perfect control (aramṇāt, ramṇātih samyamana-karmā) the earth, keeping it stable (sthirām akarat), and holds aloft the sky without a visible support (askambhane).

सविता यन्त्रैः पृथिवीमरम्णादस्कम्भने
सविता द्यामदृहत् ।

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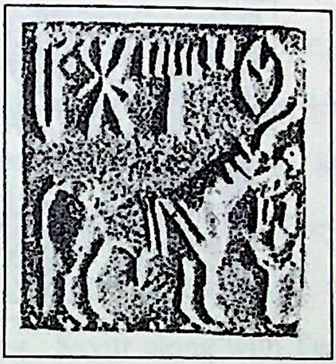

The reference here is to the beneficial rains which sustain the people (Durgāchārya, 'varshopakāreṇa pṛthivī-lokavāsino dhārayati; tad asyāh samyamanam'). This is the power (bala) of Savitṛ, which makes him the most effective devatā of the middle realm (having control over the earth-realm as well as the upper realm. And in the words of Yāska, which other devatā of the middle realm can be so powerful ('kam anyam madhyamā devam avakshyat')? He is associated with the clouds, the mind and the earth. The seer of this hymn is Archan, the son of the sage Hiraṇya-stūpa who too was a devotee of Savitṛ ('archan nāmā hairaṇya-stūpa-ṛshih'). Hiraṇya-stūpa means the monumental pillar of gold which is lustrous, or a braid of golden locks, and has an obvious reference to the sun-god; and Savitṛ is but an aspect of this god (cf. Yāska: 'āditya pi savitā uchyate'), He is of the same form or of the same function ('tad-rūpah tad-vrato vā', Durgāchārya).

Yāska cites in this context (10,34) another mantra from RV (3,55,19), identifying Savitṛ, with Tvashṭṛ. The seer of this mantra is Viśvāmitra's son Prajāpati; and 'prajāpati' literally means the procreator and protector of all beings (identical thus with Savitṛ). Tvashṭā is the provider of all forms (10,184,1 'tvashṭā rupāṇi pimśatu' 'tvashṭā rūpāṇām janitā'), and in this he is

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the most skillful among the skilled (10,53,9. 'apasām apastamo'). He projects the earth and the sky alike (10,110,9), and in this function he is closely associated with Savitṛ. He represents fertility in creation (hence called to retodhā, bhūri-retas, su-retas and puru-retas). He is juxtaposed with earth and sky (10,46,9) and with Savitṛ (9,81,4). The earth is described as having all forms and shapes (viśva-rūpa) (cf.also AV 12,1,11), and this Viśva-rūpa is the chariot on which Savitṛ as Tvashtṛ rides, and protects all beings that he has brought into being:

देवस्त्वष्टा सविता विश्वरूपः
पुपोष प्रजाः पुरुधा जजान ।

Again (1,125):

त्वष्टा च सविता चैव त्वष्टा वै रूपकृन्मतः ।
धाता प्रजापतिश्चव अथर्वाणश्च ते स्मृताः ॥

Savitṛ is to be viewed as the god of light, who combines in himself the functions of a 'vivifier' and 'impeller'. In the Vedic texts, the Savitṛ's 'sava' (creative sacrifice) is frequently mentioned (as, for instance, in RV, 5,81,2), which is addressed to Savitṛ by the seer Śyāvāśva-atreya):

विश्वा रूपाणि प्रति मुञ्चते कविः
प्रासावीद् भद्रं द्विपदे चतुष्पदे ।

But this 'sava' is one of infusing energy and life, of waking the being up to his role in existence and guiding him along. The deities of Sūrya's realm, mentioned in *Bṛhad-devatā*

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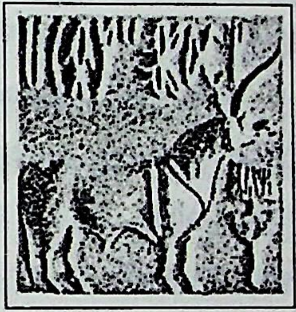
(2,12), are all engaged in the self-same task : the ādityas, the keśins, the sādhyas, Savitṛ, the Vasus, Manu, and Dadhyāṅg-atharvaṇa. They all 'propel', 'impel' (prasauti), while illumining. Savitṛ along with Tvashṭṛ, and Prajāpati, the god of gods, invites all the shining gods, and confers on them immortality (ibid,. 12,62).

त्वष्टा च सविता चैव देवदेवः प्रजापतिः ।
सर्वान् देवान् समामन्त्र्य अमृतत्वं ददुश्च ते ॥

Bṛhad-devatā (2,61-62) expressly gives Savitṛ as the name of Sūrya in his aspect of dawn. It is Savitṛ that is responsible for bringing forth the sun-god who causes the day; he dispells darkness and makes dawn appear. It is Savitṛ's own light that flashes forth and spreads all over, illumining the worlds:

संवर्तयंस्तमः सूर्यादुषसं
च प्रवर्तयन् ॥
दिवाकरं प्रसौत्येकः सविता
स्वेन कर्मणा ।



It is Savitṛ alone (ekah) that has the power to propel, impell, inspire and flash forth (pra-sauti). In this role as an usherer of dawn as the prelude to the day, the solar-spirit is called Savitṛ (the propeller, impeller, vivifier). The same Savitṛ, as the morning breaks after dawn illumining all the worlds that are there, is called Bhaga the morning sun by the sage Vasishṭha (62):

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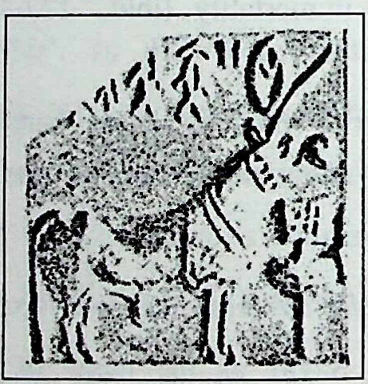
उदितो भासयंल्लोकान्
इमांश्चैष स्वरश्मिभिः ।
स्वयं वसिष्ठस्तेनैन -
मृषिराह स्तुवन् भगम् ॥

In the same manner, the Solar-spirit is called by different names signifying several aspects and functions: Pūshan (for he nourishes all beings on earth as well as the earth itself, by driving away darkness, 'pushyan kshitim poshayati pra-ṇudan raśmibhis tamam') by the sage Bharadvāja (RV 6,53-56 and 58); Vishṇu (as he envelops and permeates all the three worlds, 'trīṇi bhānti rajāmsy— asya yat padāni tu tejasā') by the sage Medhātithi; Keśi (for he makes for daylight by his splendid rays, 'prakāśam kiraṇaih kurvan'); Viśvānara (for he is perceived by each of the beings in a distinctive way, 'sampratyakaikaśas-tvenam yan manyante pṛthaṅg-narāh) ; and Vṛshākapi (for he becomes red and ascends the sky like a bull, 'vṛshaisha kapilo bhūtvā yan nākam adhirohati'). The Vedic mantras adore him by these and other names; and the divinities of the upper-realm (dyus-sthāna) are all in essence the solar-spirit.



Sāyaṇa mentions that Savitṛ is the deity who presides over the daylight after the appearance of dawn and before the emergence of Sun (RV 10,139,1).

उषसः प्रादुर्भावानन्तरं सूर्यस्योदयात्पूर्वं यः कालः तस्याभिमानी देवः सवितेत्युच्यते ॥

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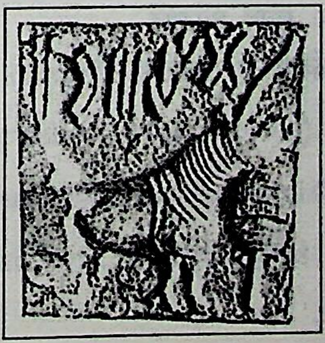
But he explains the expressions Sūrya and Savitr alike as the deity that impells all beings ('sūryasya sarvasya prerakasya ādityasya'; 'savitā sarvāsya prerako devah') The mantra that he comments upon says that Pūshan, all knowing (the nourishing aspect of the sun-god), who is also the protector of all beings (gopāh), moves about in the mid-region, looking at (viz.permeating with his rays) all the worlds (and their inhabitants); and the seer ascribes this ability to the inspiration of Savitṛ (tasya praśave); who although arises in the East illumines all guarters alike :

सूर्यरश्मिर्हरिकेशः पुरस्तात्
सविता ज्योतिरुदयामजस्रम् ।
तस्य पूषा प्रसवे याति विद्वान्
संपश्यन् विश्वा भुवनानि गोपाः ॥

Savitṛ by, implication, is the ground on which the sun's rays take shape, the prior condition for the sun-rise at dawn, and immediately succeeding the darkness of the night. Another mantra (1,25,1) invokes Savitṛ soon after invoking the night ('hvayāmirātrīm jagato niveśanīm, hvayāmi devam savitāram ūtaye'). The same mantra mentions Agni as the light of the night-time. Savitṛ, in other words, is the original form of Sūrya, and Sūrya is the more developed form of Savitṛ. Savitṛ in this sense is both unmanifest (avyakta) and manifest (vyakta); night is unmanifest and daylight (Sūrya) is manifest.



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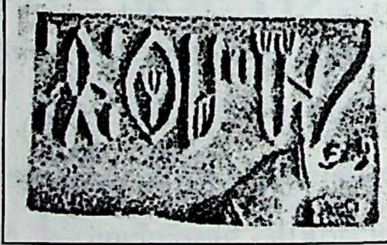
As mentioned earlier, the divinity specifically known as Savitṛ is intimately associated with the Viśve-devas (all-gods). In RV (10,36,13), the Viśve-devas are said to partake of the functions of observances (sava, 'ye savitus satya-savasya'). And Savitṛ is adored exclusively in a sūkta ascribed to the Viśvedevas (10,36,14): Savitṛ is in front of us, behind us, above us and beneath us; he is the one god that is capable of fulfilling all our heart-felt desires, and bestowing on us long life:

सविता पश्चातात्सविता पुरस्तात्
सवितोत्तरात्तात्सविताधरास्तात् ।
सविता नः सुवतु सर्वतातिं
सविता नो रासतां दीर्घमायुः ॥

This all-pervading character of Savitṛ is eulogized also in RV (10,139, 2):

स विश्वा चीरभि चष्टे घृताची-
रन्तरा पूर्वमपरं च केतुम् ॥

[cf.Mantras in exclusive praise of Savitṛ are to be found in many mantras of *Ṛgveda-Saṃhitā*. Illustrations are 1,24,5; 2,38; 4,53 and 54; 5,81-82; 6,50-9, and 71;7,38,45 and 66; 10,36,12-14;139,149].



The three lines of the Gāyatrī in the Vaishṇava ideology are said to represent the three realms of Vishṇu, each signifying also a form of Vishṇu, and a form of Sūrya:

1. तत्सवितुर्वरेण्यं - Śveta-dvīpa - Aniruddha - Vāsudeva regulating the

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outer body of the devotee - All-pervading form (sarva-gata-rūpa) - Sūrya as revealed in *Ṛgveda*

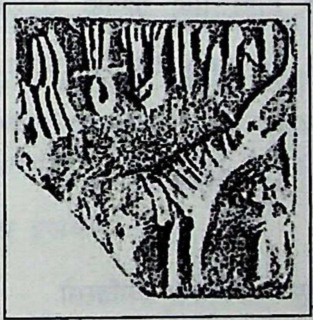
2. भर्गो देवस्य धीमहि - Anantāsana - Pradyumna - Vāsudeva regulating the heart (hṛdgata) - The spirit inside the Sun. (sūryāntargata-rūpa) - Sūrya as revealed in *Yajurveda*

3. धियो यो नः प्रचोदयात् - Vaikuṇṭha - Samkarshaṇa - Vāsudeva regulating and supporting the own-form of the soul (jīva-svarūpa-deha) - The spirit inside the soul (jīvāntargata-rūpa) - Sūrya as revealed in *Sāmaveda.*

This is also an adhyātma approach inasmuch as it holds, as can be seen from the above account, that Gāyatri represents the soul's structure and constitution. We read in *Gāyatri-tantra (2,16):*

यत्र तिष्ठति गायत्री तत्रैव ह्यात्मनः स्थितिः ॥

Gāyatri is essentially symbolic (saṅketavidyā') and formulates the Supreme Reality ("para-brāhma - nirūpaṇe') (ibid., 2,152).



ADHYĀTMA

There is in the tenth maṇḍala of Ṛgveda a hymn (149th) that is especially associated with the god Savitṛ ('Savitṛ-pratipādaka

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hairaṇyastūpa-mantra'; 'savitārchan-hairaṇyastūpas' savitram iti' sāyaṇa). As already mentioned, the seer of this hymn Archan was the son of another celebrated seer Hiraṇyastūpa (son of yet another important seer Aṅgirasa, from whose family there were more than forty seers of Ṛgvedic mantras). Archan, whose devotion to Savitṛ earned him the name Savitārchan, recalls his parent's devotion to the god Savitṛ (10,149,5), and resolves to follow his model;

हिरण्यस्तूपः सवितर्यथा त्वाङ्गिरसो
जुह्वे वाजे अस्मिन् ।
एवा त्वार्चन्नवसे वन्दमानः
सोमस्येवांशुं प्रति जागराहम् ॥

He makes here a reference to Hiraṇya-stūpa's hymns (1,31-35) addressed to Savitṛ, and hymns (9,4 and 69) adressed to Soma-pavamāna (a total of seven sūktas seen by Hiraṇya-stūpa, consisting altogether of 91 ṛks). It is interesting to note that both father and son, who are devotees of Savitṛ, mention Soma along with Savitṛ. The father has sought Soma to lead him to Sūrya (or Savitṛ) (9,4,5 'tvam sūrye na ā bhaja'), and the son resolves to be awake with regard to the role of Soma in his own adoration to Savitṛ (above, 'somasyevāmśum prati jāgarāham', where 'amśu' means the rays, the nature, or lustre, indicating the role, impact or involvement). And the father thinks of Soma in terms of light (jyoti), bliss (svar), strength (daksha), wisdom (kratu) and protection (ūti) (cf. 9,4,1 and 3); Soma it is that procures for us the wealth of earth as well as heaven (ibid, ṛk 7 'dvibarhasam rayim').

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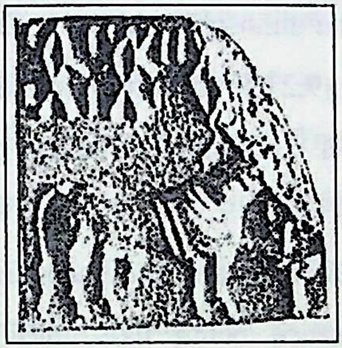

Elsewhere in the Ṛgvedic corpus, the all-knowing Soma is said to be responsible for the brilliance of the sun-god (9,28,5 'esha sūryam arochayat pavamāno vicharshiṇih'), and for the ascent of the sun-god to the higher realms (9,107,7, 'ā sūryam rohaya divi'); he is hailed as the protector or Brahmā (6,52,3 'brahmaṇas soma gopam'), the procreator, and king of the worlds (9,97,40;, 'janayan prajā bhuvánasya rājā'), the owner of the sun-god and all the celestial luminaries (9,86,29 'tava jyotīmshi pavamāna sūryah'); bestower of infinite riches (5,47,3 'samudro') and ommiscient ruler (*Kāṭhaka-brāhmaṇa*.., 7,10, 'somo rājā vichakshaṇaś chandramāh).

In the very sūkta which contains the Gāyatri mantra ascribed to Savitṛ, we have mantras (14 and 15) which also extol Soma. Soma is invoked to provide us and our beasts with food, that is free from danger and disease:

सोमो अस्यभ्यं द्विपदे चतुष्पदे च पशवे
अनमीवा इषस्करत् ॥

and to prolong our lives by driving away whatever obstructs and threatens :

अस्माकमायुर्वर्धयन्नभिमातीः सहमानः ॥

That Savitṛ is closely associated with Soma becomes thus evident.

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What then is Soma? We will have occasion to deal with the problem of Soma in some detail when introducing the ninth maṇḍala, which is exclusively devoted to the devatā, Soma-pavamāna. Suffice it to mention here that the different senses in which Soma is taken in the Vedic context indicate different approaches: the plant (ādhibhautika), the drink (adhi-yajña), moon (adhi-daivata) and mind (adhyātma). It is to be noted that in the Ṛgvedic passages, Sūrya and Soma are always intimately associated with each other: Soma shining along with the sun (9,2,6 'sam sūryeṇa rochate'), Soma purifying himself and running in the atmosphere along with the sun-god (9,27,5 'esho sūryeṇa hāsate adhi dyavi'); Soma ascending the sun's chariot (9,7,5,1, 'ā sūryasya ....adhi....ratham....aruhat'); and Soma's brilliance being like unto the sun-god's (9,100,8 'chitrebhir yāsi raśmibhih'). The moon is as antagonistic to the darkness of night as the sun is (9,108,12 'pratapam jyotishā tamah'); it is the light in the night. The lightning born of the waters in the cloud (apām napāt) is a form of Agni, and is the abhimāni-devatā of Soma. It opens up the gates of understanding with insight and radiant eyes (9,86,23 and 9,102,8 'soma gotram aṅgirobhyo-vṛṇor apa'). Soma is described frequently as bright, fascinating and luminous (aruṇa, babhru, śoṇa and hari, cf. 9,114; 8,29,1; 9,78,4 and 9,107,19,etc.).

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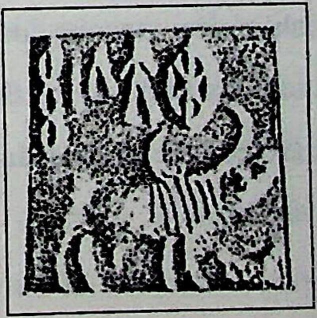
The moon's association with mind, wisdom and insight is well-known in Vedic literature. There is the famous mantra (RV,10,90,13) which makes the moon an offspring of the Spirit's mind, even as the sun was born from the spirit's eyes ('chandramā manaso jātah, chakshos sūryo ajāyata'). The juxtaposition of mind with Chandra, eyes with Sūrya, vital current with Vāyu, and brilliance with Agni is also famous (AV, 19,43). And of the pair, if the Sungod is the eye of the gods, the moon-god is the eye of the manes (*Maitrāyaṇī-saṃhitā*, 4,2,1 'asau vā aditya devānām chakshuh, chandramā vai pitṛṇam chakshuh'). If one is the sight, the other is insight. He is also the eye (9,5,4, 'ekam akshi vāvṛdhuh'). The moon (Soma) is described as the parent of all mind-processes (cf.9,76,4 'pitā matīnām : 9,96,5 'janitā matīnām'), the leader of thoughts and protector of wisdom (9,76,4, 'netā matīnām patir dhiyah'), and the master of mind (9,75,2 'manasas patih'); he is the true and never failing knower of all things here and beyond, hidden and revealed (manīshi, medhira, vipra, viśvavid, dhīra, kratu-vid and kavi-kratu). He is the lord of all speech (*Aitareya-brāhmaṇa*, 6,3,3 'vāg vai subrahmaṇyā, tasyai somo rāja vatsah'). He is also the soul of sacrifices, the lord of the sacrificers, and the assigner for gods their shares in the sacrifice (10,85,19, 'bhāgam devabhyo vidadhātyāyan')



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In all these references, Soma represents the evolved, well-ordered, profound and far-reaching mind, the mind that helps us have the vision of Savitṛ, the hidden aspect of Sūrya (or the sun-god) that vivifies all things and impels all beings to their respective functions. It is the sure source of inspiration (preraṇā), (cf. 9,85,2 'asmāntsamaye pavamāna chodaya'). It is only in the sense of being the mind that Soma is described as the 'abiding, efficient and over-reaching power of the sense-functions, (9,85,2 'daksho devānām asi'), and as the very soul of sense-function (9,85,3, 'ātmendrasya bhavasi dhāsir uttamah'); the secrets of all the sensations are laid bare by the shining Soma (9,95,2, 'devo devānām guhyāni nāmāvishkṛṇoti').

The seer Archana described (10,149,3) Soma as 'the'other-principle' ('anyad abhavat', Sāyaṇa, "anyat savitṛ-vyatiriktam idam devatāntaram") which came into being at the instance of, and subsequent to (paśchā), the Savitṛ, and became adorable and worthy of worship (yajatram, Sāyaṇa "yashṭavyam"). The mythical bird of golden wings, Suparṇa (or Garutamān), which is said to have brought Soma from immortal and high heavens to the firmament, was the first offspiring of Savitṛ, acting without doubt in perfect accordance with Savitṛ's own nature ('asya anu dharma'). Suparṇa is also often identified with Soma (e.g.,9,9,81,2; 9,97,7; 9,108,3,etc.). This is a figurative manner of indicating the inspired mind, which

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is Soma, and the source of such inspiration, Savitṛ :

पश्चेदमन्यदभवद्यजत्र -
ममर्त्यस्य भुवनस्य भूना ।
सुपर्णो अङ्ग सवितुर्गरुत्मान्
पूर्वो जातः स उ अस्यानुधर्म ॥

It is by the restraining instruments such as the Soma (viz.disciplined, profound and inspired mind, described in the mantra, 10,149,1 as 'yantraih') that Savitṛ establishes the earth (pṛthivīm) firmly easily and happily, and holds aloft the high heavens (dyām) that is devoid of all visible supports (askambhane, "patana-pratibandhakam ālambanam, tad-rahite). Savitṛ also has settled in the mid-region, beyond interference from ought (atūrte, "kenapy ahimsite"), Soma (viz.mind) called here 'samudra' (meaning not only ocean and cloud, but ever-active mind). Soma is described as 'samudra' in several passages in *Ṛgveda* (e.g. 5,47,3; 9,86,29 'tvam samudra asi viśvavit-kave'; 9,97,40) in the sense of being the bestower in profusion of riches; the reference is to a vast, almost infinite, field in which mind operates creatively and incessantly. The image of an unruly impetuous horse also is significantly presented ('aśvam ivādhukshat dhunim')

It is important to note that the earth which is firmly established by Savitṛ (10,149,1) symbolizes matter, and the heavens which Savitṛ holds aloft without any other support is spirit. And in between the two is midregion, where Savitṛ has settled Soma ('atūrte baddham savita" samudram'). This is obviously the

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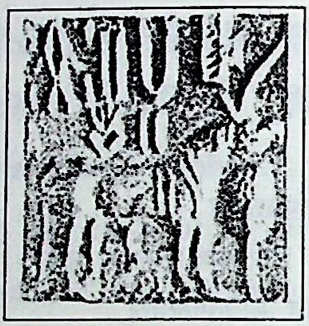
mind, which is guided on the right path by Savitṛ (who is therefore called 'sunītha', 'sushtu netā' 1,35,10). Savitṛ, in association with this Soma, is variously described as 'asura' (giver of life, 'prāṇa-dātā), 'vi-suparṇa' (possessor of splendid forms), 'svāvān' (with unending possessions), 'vicharshaṇī' (knower of all), 'chitra-bhānu' (glorious and multitudinous in expression), 'hiraṇya-pāṇi (golden-handed), 'yajata' (adorable) 'gabhīra-vepā (inscrutable in his ways) and 'sumṛḷīka' 'provider of great happiness' (all in the hymn of Hiraṇya-stūpa, RV, 1,35). Archan, the son of the Hiraṇyastūpa, has in his mind this picture when he speaks of 'somasyevāmśum' (10,149,5) when he resolves to be firm in his adoration of the devatā Savitṛ.



Yāska, in the course of his interpretation of the mantra (RV, 5,81,2) dedicated to the devatā Savitṛ, takes the adhyātma approach. Savitṛ is the seer (kavi in the sense of 'medhāvi', *Nighaṇṭu*, 3,15,10) one who cognizes alike the past, present and future, the seer of the beyond, omniscient. The forms that he releases, or flashes forth, are the thought-processes; they are brought to light from the womb of obscurity or darkness. They are shown up by Savitṛ for the welfare of all beings, bipeds as well as quadrupeds. He becomes most adorable (vareṇya), when he

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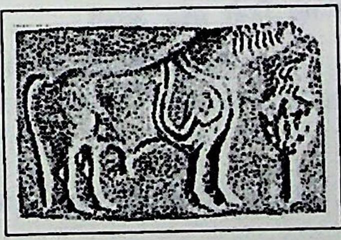
'inspires us to move upwards towards the heavens (viz.the spirit). Below is the passage containing Yāska's comments (12,13), with Durgāchārya's annotations within brackets:

विश्वा (सर्वाणि) रूपाणि (रूपवत्स्वर्थेषु) प्रतिमुञ्चते (आबध्नाति) कविः (कवति गच्छत्यसौ नित्यं । कवित्वादेव) प्रासावीत् (जनयति तमः अपघ्नन् रूपाणि आविः कुर्वन् ।) द्विपदे (द्विपाद्भ्यः मनुष्यादिभ्यः) चतुष्पदे (गवादिभ्यः) । विनाकमख्यत् (विख्यायययति नाकं द्यां च, विदर्शयति । तदा हि तस्यां विकीर्णरश्मयो भवन्ति।) सविता वरेण्योऽनु प्रयाणमुषसो वि राजति (उषसः प्रयाणं अनु विराजति प्रकाशते।) (सोऽस्माकं नामेदं करोतु इत्याशिषा स्तुतिर्निराकांक्षा।) (ऋग्वेदे ४,४,२४,२ श्यावाश्वस्यार्षं 5,81,2)। सर्वाणि प्रज्ञानानि प्रतिमुञ्चते मेधावी कविः क्रान्तलक्षणो भवति । कवतेर्वा प्रसुवति भद्रं द्विपाद्भ्यश्च चतुष्पाद्भ्यश्च (यद्भक्तेषां भद्रं कल्याणं तत्तत् प्रसुवति।) । व्यचिख्यापयन् नाकं सविता वरणीयः । प्रयाणमुषसो विराजत्यथोरामः सवित्र इति पशुसमाम्नाये विज्ञायते ॥

Savitṛ is hailed as the most real, source of all order and true-principle (satya-dharmā, RV, 10,34,8); and in this sense he is one with Varuṇa, who represents the cosmic order (ṛta, cf.RV 2,38,2; 3,33,6; 4,53,4; 10,34,8; 10,139,3; and 10,85,24). The human beings must follow the course of Savitṛ and accomplish his task (AV, 6,23,3):

देवस्य सवितुः कर्म कुर्वन्तु मानवाः ।



However, he is not to be looked upon only as a devatā symbolized by the solar orb and as the sun-god who has created the world and who is preserving it (RV 4,53,6, 'bṛhat-sumnah prasavītā niveśano jagatah'); he is the very soul (or self) of all

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that moves and all that stays in the world (RV 1,115,1 'sūrya ātmā jagatas tasthushaś cha'). He is the sight of the human beings who can see (nṛchakshā), and he abides in the midst of the heart-sky, filling with his presence and illumines the earth as well as the atmosphere and the higher realms (10,139,2):

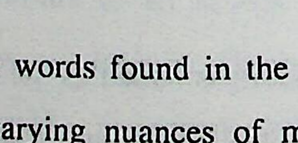
नृचक्षा एष दिवो मध्य आस्त
आ पप्रिवान् रोदसी अन्तरिक्षम् ।

Savitṛ is really ones own self, vivifying the body, the sense-functions and the mind, providing the wealth for total welfare; and lighting up all the thoughts, resolves and aspirations, He is the one spirit that prompts all our actions, and inspires all our efforts (sū preraṇe). He releases functions and actions from their unmanifest states (shūng, prāṇi-garbha-vimochane).

रायो बुध्नः सङ्गमनो वसूनाम्
विश्वा रूपाभि चष्टे शचीभिः ।
देव इव सविता सत्यधर्मेन्द्रो न
तस्थौ समरे धनानाम् ॥

It may be recalled that *Gāyatrī-tantra* (2,152) suggests that the mantra dedicated to Savitṛ is essentially symbolic, it formulates the nature of ones own self and also the nature of the Supreme Spirit (Brahman):

यत्र तिष्ठति गायत्री तत्रैव ह्यात्मनः स्थितिः ॥
सङ्केतविद्या गायत्री परब्रह्मनिरूपणे ॥



(5) THE MANTRA'S IMPORT

The words found in the mantra acquire varying nuances of meaning

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in accordance with the different approaches mentioned above. No general translation of the mantra in English would therefore be possible or acceptable. This is true of any mantra in *Ṛgveda-saṁhitā*. The mantra is expressly stated to belong to the devatā, Savitṛ (hence the name sāvitri for the mantra). But it is not addressed directly to the devatā Savitṛ. The word Savitṛ occurs here only in its genitive form, viz. 'savituh' ('of Savitṛ'), the main reference being 'bhargah' ('savituh bhargah').

'Savitṛ is qualified by 'devah' meaning 'the luminous god') and 'bharga' by 'vareṇyam' (meaning 'most adorable'). The association of 'deva' with 'Savitṛ' is very frequent in *Ṛgveda-saṁhitā*; in fact, Savitṛ is rarely mentioned without the epithet 'deva'. The first word of the mantra 'tat' (meaning 'that'), may refer to Savitṛ or to his 'bharga'.

The order (anvaya) of the words in the mantra for eliciting the import would be either of the following:

(i) यः (the relative pronoun, 'who' referring to Savitṛ) नः (our) धियः (thoughts) प्रचोदयात् (inspires), तत् (taken in the genitive case, तस्य) देवस्य सवितुः (of the god Savitṛ), वरेण्यं भर्गः (most adorable lustre), धीमहि (we contemplate upon)॥

(ii) यः (for the relative pronoun यत् 'which') नः धियः प्रचोदयात्, तत् (taken in the nominative case, 'that') सवितुः वरेण्यं भर्गः धीमहि ॥

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1. तत् ।

The grammatical provision for the employment of the word तत् in the sense of तस्य has been given thus by Bhaṭṭa-Bhāskara (*Taittirīya-saṃhitā-bhāshya*, 1,5,6):

तत्तस्य सुपां सुलुक् इति षष्ट्या लुक् । तस्य सवितुः देवस्य सुपां सुलुक् (the shashṭi-lopa in tat)

When the pronoun refers to 'bharga', the sentence would be: सवितुः देवस्य प्रेरयितुः तत् तादृशं भर्गः ।

There is a third sense in which 'tat' is taken. It is well-known that the Supreme, absolute, undifferentiated Brahman is designated as तत् (in statements like 'tat tvam asi'; 'tad brahmā', 'tad vāyuh', 'tad iti brahmābhidhānam'; 'om tat sad iti nirdeśah trividho brahmaṇas smṛtah', *Bhagavad-gitā,* 17,23, 'tat-śabdo hi brahma vāchī prasiddhah' etc.). The suggestive word 'tat' may refer either to Savitṛ (jagat-preraksya brahma-rūpasya savituh) or to his 'bharga' (savituh jagat-prasiddham brahma-rūpa-jyotih). तत् in this sense is cognate with तत which signifies pervasion (vyāpta), permeated with all auspicious qualities (guṇaih tatam vyāptam) The word symbolizes also Agni, or Paraśu-rāma who is the inner ruler of Agni. The word construed along with Savitṛ would indicate Brahman, who is well-known in scriptures as the inner controller of all beings (sarvāntaryāmi), the creator of all beings (jagat-srashṭā) and the inspirer or prompter (preraka).

सर्वेषु वेदेषु लोकेषु च प्रसिद्धं ब्रह्मस्वरूपम् ।

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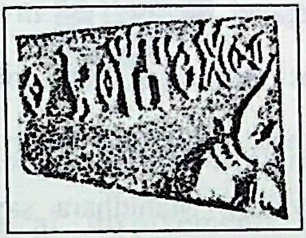
2. देवस्य सवितुः ।



Savitṛ is primarily a 'deva'. And a deva is distinguished by the nature of playfulness, luminosity, brilliance, light, and transcendence (from the root 'divu', krīḍādishu with ach-pratyaya; dyotana-svabhāvah; 'devo dyuloka-vartitvāt devanāt dīpanāt; dīptasya; dīpti-krīḍāyuktasya). He shines with dazzling light in the sky, and is adored by all the gods:

दीव्यते क्रीडते यस्मात् रोचते द्योतते दिवि ।
तस्माद्देव इति प्रोक्तः स्तूयते सर्वदेवतैः ॥
(योगियाज्ञवल्क्ये)

The devā is also a symbol of supreme and uninterrupted happiness, which expresses itself as shining light ('devasyeti sarvādyotanātmakā khaṇḍa-chideka-rasah'). The happiness is that of the one, undifferentiated and pure consciousness (akhaṇḍānandaika-rasah).

As qualifying Savitṛ, the deva illumines the world by sun-rise and sun-set, and makes possible all worldly transactions during the course of the day ('dīvyati udayāstamgamanābhyām loka-yātrām pravartayan deśāntaram yātiti'); he provides light and he himself shines ('dīvyati prakāśata iti'): he abides in the heart of the devotee, and is percieved only there in meditation, which is in reality the upper realms or dyus-sthāna, and plays about in the heart-lotus ('dyuloka-vartitvāt, dhyātatvāt hṛdayāravinda-madhye krīḍatīti' vā).

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The word Savitṛ has already been explained in some detail. As relevant to the mantra that is being considered, the word's derivation from the root 'shū' (or śu, prasavaiśvaryayoh') in the sense of procreation and lordship, or from the root 'shūng' ('prāṇi-garbha-vimochane' in the sense of making manifest what is hidden, is frequently referred to. Savitṛ procreates (sūte) the rains which are the instruments of welfare of all beings (sakala-jana-nirvṛti-hetum vṛshṭim), and makes for (sauti) the alround welfare of his devotees ('sakala-śreyāmsi dhātṛ-nām'). We read in *Yogi-yājñavalkya:*

सविता सर्वभूतानां सर्वभावान् प्रसूयते ।
सवनात् प्रेरणाच्चैव सविता तेन चोच्यते ॥

Savitṛ also inspires his devotees to engage themselves in the right actions and tread the correct path (preraṇā), being the inner controller (antaryāmi). Mahīdhara says:

सवितुः प्रेरकस्य अन्तर्यामिणः विज्ञानानन्दस्वभावस्य हिरण्य-गर्भोपाध्यवच्छिन्नस्य वा आदित्यान्तरपुरुषस्य वा ब्रह्मणः ।

As the producer of rains (sūte, 'ṇvul tṛchau'), Savitṛ is responsible also for the production of all beings:-

आदित्याज्जायते वृष्टिः । वृष्टेरन्नं । ततः प्रजाः ॥

Jayatīrtha takes the word Savitṛ in this sense (*Ṛgbhashya-ṭīkā*)

प्रसविता जगतो जनक इति सविता ।
षूञ् प्राणिप्रसव इत्यस्मात्तृच् ॥

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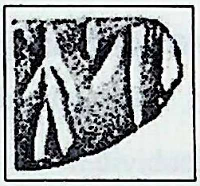
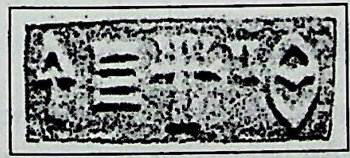


Śrīnivāsa-tīrtha explains the grammatical involvements in the formation of the word Savitṛ from the root 'shūñ:

षूञ् प्राणिप्रसवे इत्यत्र ञकारोऽनुबन्धार्थः । षूञ् अस्मात् तृच्प्रत्यये चकारलोपे 'आर्धधातुकस्येड्वलादे' रिति सूत्रेण षकारस्य वल्प्रत्याहारान्तर्गतत्वेन षूञ् धातोः वलादित्वादिडागमे षु इ तृ इति जाते 'सार्वधातुकार्धधातुकयो' रिति उकारस्य गुणे षोइतृ इति जाते, 'एचोऽयवायवः' इत्यनेन अवादेशे षव् इतृ इति जाते, 'धात्वादेः षः सः' इति षकारस्य सकारे सवित्रिति प्रातिपदिक निष्पत्तौ सत्यां, पश्चात् स्वाद्युत्पत्तौ सविता भवति ॥



3. **वरेण्यं भर्गः ।**

The word 'vareṇyam' (generally meaning excellent, best, most adorable) qualifies 'bhargah', which signifies effulgence, splendour, lustre, light, power. The latter word is derived from the root 'brasj' (meaning "to cook', to ripen", "to heat up", pāke with the 'asun' pratyaya) sarvadhātubhya asun) in accordance with Pāṇini (6,4,47, 'bhrasjoropadhayo ramanyatarasyām' iti ropadhayor lopo ramāgamah'). The derivation is explained thus :

'अञ्च्यञ्जियुजिभृजिभ्यः कुश्च ।' इत्यौणादिकसूत्रेण असुन् प्रत्ययः कवर्गश्चान्तादेशः सान्तमेतत् ॥

The word thus derived acquires the sense of burning up ('bhṛj dāhe', 'bhrasja pāka ity asmād asuni rūpam dāhakam tat'); the reference is to the sins (sarva-pāpānām), the misery in life (duhkhānām), the tree of transmigration (samsāra), darkness of

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ignorance (avidyātamah). As the destroyer of the world, Rudra is called Bharga (bharjayati jagat samharati). Bhaṭṭa-bhāskara says (*Taittirīya-samhitā-bhāshya* 1,5,6):

भृजः पाके भवेद्धातुर्यस्मात्पाचयते ह्यसौ ।
भ्राजते दीप्यते यस्मात् जगदन्ते हरत्यपि ॥

And we read in *Yogi-yājñavalkya* that this burning up also means resplendent appearance:

कालाग्निरूपमास्थाय सप्तार्चिः सप्तरश्मिभिः ।
भ्राजते तत्स्वरूपेण तस्माद् भर्गः स उच्यते ॥

There is the extended sense of burning up the nescience (avidyā) which is responsible for the ever-recurrent transmigratory involvement, so that the own-nature of radiance or self-effulgence is brought out. In this sense, the word stands for Brahman, and agrees with the pronoun 'tat' ('tat bhargah'):

तत्पदलक्ष्यं भर्गः । अत्रत्य भर्गशब्दः सकारान्तः ।
भृज दाह इत्यस्माद्धातोः स्वसाक्षात्कारेण
अनादिजन्ममरणपरम्परारूपं संसारबीज
भूतमूलाज्ञानदाहकं स्वयं ज्योतिर्निर्गुणं ब्रह्म ॥

Sāyaṇa also says: 'avidyā-tatkāryayor bharjanāt bhargah; svayam-jyotih parabrahmātmakam tejah'.

It has been pointed out that the word 'bharga' also has the meanings of 'annam' (food) and 'dhanam' (wealth), besides 'tejah' (splendour, effulgence).

An interesting explanation of the word has its source in *Maitrāyaṇīya-upanishad* (6,7). Bharga here means the sun-god, the lustre of which,

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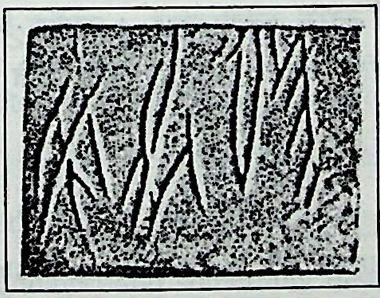
according to *Chhāndogya* (1,7,5), is not only in the solar orb but also in eyes of the individual. The visual faculty is made possible by the light within. The sun-god moves by his rays of light.

अथ भर्गा इति यो ह वा अमुष्मिन्नादित्ये निहितस्तारकोऽक्षिणि वैष भर्गाख्यो भाभिर्गतिरस्य (किरणैरधिष्ठानधर्मैः गमनमस्य) हीति भर्गः । भर्जयतीति वैष भर्गा इति रुद्रः ॥



The same text presents another interpretation, ascribed to the exponents of the Brahman, to the effect that the word 'bharga' really means Brahman. This interpretation takes the letters constituting the word (bha, ra and ga) separately, and shows that each of the three letters has its own meaning.

ब्रह्मवादिनोऽथ भ इति भासयतीमान् लोकान् (tejo-maṇḍalāntargata-chit-prakāśena) र इति रञ्जयतीमानि भूतानि (prāṇānugata-chidānandātmanā - sukhātmakam karoti) ग इति गच्छन्ति (layam prāpnuvanti) अस्मिन् आगच्छन्ति (āvirbhavanti prabodha-sṛshṭyoh) अस्मादिमाः प्रजाः (sthāvara-jaṅgamāh) । तस्माद् भरगत्वाद् भर्गः ॥

The letter 'bha' indicates that the worlds are illumined (bheti bhāsayate lokān) by the effulgence contained within the solar orb; the letter 'ra' suggests that all beings are made happy (reti rañjayate prajāh) by the power of consciousness and bliss inherent in life; and the letter 'ga' indicates that all the creatures are

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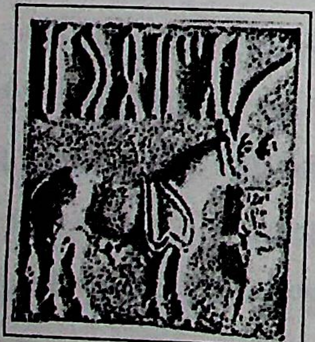
recurrent in their involvement in the transmigratory existence (ga ityāgachchhate ajasram): they appear during the moment of creation, and disappear during dissolution.

This is also the explanation justified by etymological considerations offered by Ānanda-tīrtha in his *Ṛgbhāshya*, except that he takes the letter 'ga' in the sense of knowledge:

भारतिज्ञानरूपत्वाद् भर्गो ध्येयोऽखिलैर्जनैः ।
(भा दीप्तौ । रतिः क्रीडा रमु क्रीडायाम् । गमे र्ज्ञानार्थता गम्लृ गतौ । गत्यर्थानां ज्ञानार्थत्वात् । धातुसमुदायादसुन् ।)



Bharga also means food (anna); the devatā Savitṛ will bestow on the devotee the benefits of abundant food and wealth. In this context, 'dhīmahi' would mean 'may we become recipients of this gift' (dhārayāmah).

भर्गःशब्देन अन्नमभिधीयते । यः सविता देवो धियः प्रचोदयति तस्य प्रसादात् भर्गः अन्नादिलक्षणं फलं धीमहि धारयामः । तस्याधारभूता भवेम इत्यर्थः । भर्गशब्दस्य अन्नपरत्वे धीशब्दस्य कर्मपरत्वे चाथर्वणम् (गोपथ ब्राह्मणम् १,३२) "वेदांश्छन्दांसि सवितुर्वरेण्यं भर्गो देवस्य कवयोऽन्नमाहुः । कर्माणि धियस्तदु ते प्रब्रवीमि प्रचोदयत् सविता याभिरेतीति ॥"

This 'bharga', which is the supreme effulgence which bestows the bliss of liberation is naturally most eagerly desired and much sought after by all beings who are intent on the higher values of life and emancipation, hence described as 'varṇyam' (varaṇīyam). The word is derived from

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the root 'vṛñ' (varaṇe, meaning 'to choose', 'to opt for', 'to select') and acquire the eṇya-pratyaya (vṛñ eṇyaḥ, *Uṇādi-sūtra*, 328, vṛṇoteḥ karmaṇi eṇyaḥ). The grammatical involvements are explained thus:

वृधातो ऋकारस्य सार्वधातुक अर्धधातुकोरित्यनेन गुणे कृतं वरू इति रूपं । तदनन्तरं एण्यप्रत्ययेन वरेण्यमिति रूपं भवति ।

(Pāṅgari-āchārya:*Sandhyā-bhāshya*).

Sāyaṇa explains that the word indicates that the solar effulgence is most sought after (sambhajanīyam) as something worship-worthy (upāsyatayā) and something that must be known perfectly (jñeyatayā), by all those who are eager to fulfil all the four values of life (dharma, artha, kāma and moksha) (varaṇīyam sarvair api purushārtha - kāmibhiḥ, mumukshubhiḥ). What is most sought after is also the best (śreshṭham).

Ānanda-tīrtha (*Ṛgbhāshya*) takes vareṇya in the sense of being worthy of being contemplated upon by all people (dhyeyokhilair janaiḥ). And Jayatīrtha (*Ṛgbhāshya-ṭīkā*) explains that what is most adorable is so because of the excellence of the qualities possessed:

वरणीयो भजनीयः वरेण्यः । गुणोन्नतेर्हेतोर्वरणीय इति । तद्वरेण्यशब्दार्थयोर्हेतुसद्भावो दर्शितः ।

There is another derivation of the word, from the root vṛjña ('to receive', to accept), which emphasizes the sense of grateful acceptance

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(vrīyate iti vareṇyah, with kṛt-pratyaya ṇyanta). There is a third possible interpretation: he, adoring whom, the gods become powerful is vareṇya (from the root īḍ stutau; varāh īśate aneneti; the gods because of this superior status are known as varāh).

4. धीमहि ।

'We contemplate, meditate, settle our thought' on the adorable effulgence of the divinity in Savitṛ (dhyāyema, dhyāyāma, chintayāmah, manasā dhārayāmah). The word derived from the root dhyai (chintāyam) in ling, with mahing-pratyaya of ātmanepada, first person is in the plural number, because the adorability is of universal relevance (dhyeyah akhilaih), and the expression is significantly in the sense of prayer by the teacher and his associates :

ध्यायेमहि । प्रार्थनायां लिङ् । ध्यायतेः संप्रसारणं छान्दसम् । ध्यायेमहीति शब्दोक्तौ धीमहीत्येददुच्यते । वयं छात्रादिसहिताः सौरं तेजः ध्यायेमहि । एतेन न बहुवचनानुपपत्तिः ॥

The word 'dhīmahi' has been taken by some authorities in the sense of worship, service (upāsmahe; sevām kurmah). There is also an extended meaning attached to the resolve to contemplate (dhyāyāmah). Dhyāna here is the identification of ones own inner being with the self-luminous Brahman as the inner controller ('soham asmīty anena prakareṇa

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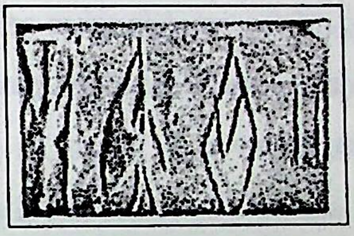
chintayāmah), the foundation for phenomenal existence, but devoid of all involvement with it:

बुद्ध्यादि सर्वदृश्यसाक्षिलक्षणं यन्मे स्वरूपं तत् सर्वाधिष्ठानभूतं परमानन्दं निरस्तसमस्तानर्थरूपं स्वप्रकाशचिदात्मकं ब्रह्म इत्येवं ध्यायेम ॥

The very implication of the resolve in the expression 'dhīmahi' is that it is only this Brahman as the inner controller (antaryāmi) that is worthy of contemplation ('dhīmahī-ty asya tātparyam dhyeya iti'). This expression occurs with reference to Savitṛ in another mantra of *Ṛgveda* (5,82,1), which is almost identical with the celebrated Gāyatri in content as well as import :

तत्सवितुर्वृणीमहे वयं देवस्य भोजनम् ।
श्रेष्ठं सर्वधातमं तुरं भगस्य धीमहि ॥



5. यः नः धियः प्रचोदयात् ।

The relative pronoun (masculine) 'yah' may refers to Savitṛ, the devatā of the mantra, 'yah Savitā Sūryah', or in the form of 'yat' (neuter) to the 'bharga' of Savitṛ (yah iti linga-vyatyayah, yad bhargah dhiyah prachodayāt, tad dhyāyema iti samanvayah') (Sāyaṇa). The change, in the word's gender (as 'yat') also suggests that it should agree with the initial word 'tat': it refers to the Brahman who is the very self of all beings (pratyag-brahma):

य इत्यलिङ्गधर्मं यत् सत्यज्ञानादिलक्षणं ब्रह्म । तस्य तच्छब्दनिर्दिष्टस्यात्मनः स्वरूपभूतं परं ब्रह्म तत्सवितुरित्यादि पदैः निर्दिश्यते ॥

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If the word is taken to refer to Savitṛ himself, then the justification is as follows:

यद्वा यः सविता सूर्यः धियः कर्माणि प्रचोदयात् प्रेरयति तस्य सवितुः सर्वस्य प्रसवितुः देवस्य द्योतमानस्य सूर्यस्य तत्सर्वैः दृश्यमानतया प्रसिद्धं वरेण्यं ... ।

The word 'nah' means 'for us' (asmākam), referring to the individual souls conditioned by their own specific body-mind equipments (tattad antahkaraṇādyupādhi-bhinnām jīvānām asmākam), or to all of us involved in the transactional world (sarveshām samsāriṇām).

The key-word in the mantra is 'dhiyah'. Like 'dhīmahi', this word also is derived from the root 'dhyai' (chintāyām, with kvip-pratyaya, *Vārtika*, 21,51, 'dhyāyateh samprasāraṇam cha). The original word is 'dhīh, and it is modified (halah) to give the sense of plural number and accusative case. The word has different meanings : knowledge, thoughts, actions, rites. Yāska lists the word under names of knowledge as well as under names of actions ('dhīriti prajñākarma-nāmasu paṭhitam'). Thus it suggests not only contemplation with thought - processes but with appropriate rites or actions. It is in this sense that we read in *Taittirīya-upanishad* (2,1) the following:

विज्ञानं यज्ञं तनुने । कर्माणि तनुतेऽपि च । विज्ञानं देवाः सर्वे ब्रह्मज्येष्ठमुपासते ॥

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One engages himself in actions only after fully understanding, and resolving:

धीवृत्तीः तत्तत्प्राणिकर्मसापेक्षः सन् स्वर्गादिसाधन काम्यकर्माद्यनुष्ठानेषु तत्त्वसाक्षात्कारं प्रति बहिरङ्गसाधननिष्कामकर्मानुष्ठानेषु अन्तरङ्गसाधनेषु श्रुत्यन्तरश्रवण तदर्थमनन निदिध्यासनेषु च ॥

Sāyaṇa takes this word in the sense of ritualistic actions and thoughts concerning dharma (karmāṇi dharmādi-vishayā vā buddhih).

In this sense, 'dhīh' is different from 'manas' (mind or thoughts): it represents a higher view-point or vision, a power to raise the mind to a higher level, which function is peculiarly associated with Savitṛ. So *Śvetāśvatara-upanishad* (2,1) speaks of this :

युञ्जानः प्रथमं मनस्तत्त्वाय सविता धियः
अग्नेर्ज्योतिर्निचाय्य पृथिव्या अध्याभरत् ॥

The expression 'prachodayāt' literally means: May he prompt us, inspire us, impel us to undertake the ritualistic actions or to entertain good thoughts (dhiyah). The root of the word is 'chud' (preraṇe) with the prefix 'pra', giving the sense of 'prerayet' (or the form prerayati).

प्रकर्षेण प्रेरयति । सकलकर्मानुष्ठानप्रवणा दुष्कर्मविमुखाश्चास्मद् बुद्धीः करोति(यः) तस्य सवितुस्तेजो ध्यायेमहीति सम्बन्धः ।

Savitṛ or his lustre inspires all our good thoughts and actions in actuality; and so the word is to be construed as 'prochadayati' (prerayati).

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The total import is given by several mediaeval authors in the following ways :

(1) यो देवः सविताऽस्माकं धियो धर्मादिगोचरः।
प्रेरयेत्तस्य तद् भर्गस्तद्वरेण्यमुपास्महे ॥

(2) बुद्धीः कर्माणि वाऽस्माकं यः प्रेरयति तस्य तु।
देवस्य सवितुः ख्यातं वरेण्यं चिन्तयेमहः ॥

(3) नः अस्माकं अशेषजीवानां धियो बुद्धीः
प्रचोदयात् प्रेरयेत् ।
तस्य सवितुर्देवस्य नारायणस्य तद्गुणैस्ततं
तस्मादेव वरेण्यं भर्गोरूपं धीमहि चिन्तयाम॥
(श्रीनिवासतीर्थ)

(4) यत्तेजः सूर्यमण्डलाभिधेयं श्रेष्ठं पापभञ्जनहेतुभूतं
तदस्माकं बुद्धीः श्रेयस्करेषु कर्मसु प्रचोदयात् ॥
(भारद्वाजधर्मशास्त्रे)

(5) तदित्येतत्परं ब्रह्म ध्येयं तत्सूर्यमण्डले ।
सवितुः सकलोत्पत्तिसंहारकारिणः ॥१॥
वरेण्यमाश्रयणीयं यदाधारमिदं जगत् ।
भर्गः स्वसाक्षात्कारेणाविद्याकार्यदाहकम् ॥२॥
देवस्य ज्ञानरूपस्य स्वानन्दात्क्रीडतोऽपि वा ।
धीमह्यहं स एवेति तेनैवाभेदसिद्धये ॥३॥
धियोऽन्तःकरणवृत्तीः प्रत्यक्प्रवणकारिणीः ।
य इत्यरूपमव्यक्तं सत्यज्ञानादिलक्षणम् ॥४॥
नोऽस्माकं बहुधाऽध्यस्तभेदेनानेन देहिनाम् ।
प्रचोदयेत् प्रेरयति सत्यज्ञानादिलक्षणः ॥५॥
(स्मृतिभास्करे)

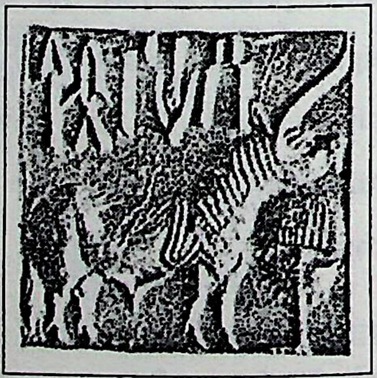
(6) देवस्य सवितुस्तस्य धियो यो नः प्रचोदयात् ।
भर्गो वरेण्यं तद् ब्रह्म धीमहीत्यर्थ उच्यते ॥
(विश्वामित्रकल्पे)

(7) यो देवः सविताऽस्माकं धियो धर्मादिगोचराः ।
प्रेरयेत्तस्य यद् भर्गस्तद् वरेण्यमुपास्महे ।
(अगस्त्यसंहितायाम्)

(8) देवस्य सवितुस्तेजो वरेण्यं भर्गसंज्ञितम् ।
ध्यायेमहीति शब्दोक्तौ धीमहीत्यर्थ उच्यते ।
यः शब्दश्च यदित्यर्थे लिङ्गव्यत्ययतो भवेत् ॥
(मन्त्रदीपिकायाम्)

(9) यद् ब्रह्म नित्यं हृदि संनिविष्टं माम्
प्रेरयत्तिष्ठति नः सुबुद्धीः ।
भर्गस्तदाख्यं भजनीयमेतत् ध्यायामि
नित्यं रविमण्डलस्थम् ॥
(निरुक्तभाष्ये)

(10) अर्कमध्यगतं ध्यायेत्पुरुषं तु महाद्युतिम् ॥
(मार्कण्डेयसंहितायाम्)



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Bhaṭṭa-Bhāskara's comments on this mantra in his Bhāshya on *Taittirīya-saṃhitā* (1,5,6):

आहवनीयमुपतिष्ठते । तत्सवितुरिति गायत्र्या । तत् तस्य 'सुपां सुलुक्' इति षष्ठ्या लुक् । तस्य सवितुः देवस्य दानादिगुणयुक्तस्य स्वभूतं तत्प्रसादलभ्यं वा । अत एव वरेण्यं वरणीयं सर्वैः प्रार्थनीयम् । भर्गः तेजः अन्नं धनं वा । वयं धीमहि धारयेम । तस्यैव प्रसादात् तस्य आधारभूता भवेम । धीङ् आधारे दैवादिकः। 'छन्दसि लुङ् लिङ् लिटः' इति लङि 'बहुलं छन्दसि' इति शपो लुक् ।

कस्य ? इत्याह - यो देवः सविता अस्माकं धियः कर्माणि प्रचोदयात् प्रचोदयेत् प्रवर्तयेत् ॥

यद्वा धियः धर्मादिगोचराः बुद्धीः प्रचोदयात् प्रेरयेत्। लेट्याडागमः । तस्य सवितुरिति ॥

यद्वा सवितुर्देवस्य तदन्नादि धीमहि । किमित्याह - यः इति । लिङ्गव्यत्ययः । यदस्माकं धियः प्रचोदयात् प्रेरयति ॥

यद्वा यो देवः सविता विश्वस्य प्रसविता । अस्माकं धर्मादिगोचराः धियः प्रेरयति । तस्य स्वभूतं वरेण्यं सर्वैः भजनीयं भर्गः । पापानां तापनं तेजोमण्डलात्मकं। धीमहि मनसा धारयामः ।ध्यायतेरेव वा छान्दसं संप्रसारणम् ॥

एवं बोधप्रकाशाभ्यां समस्तस्य प्रपञ्चस्य उपकुर्वाणं श्रेयोर्थिभिः भजनीयं सूर्यात्मना स्थितं पारमेश्वरं तेज उपास्यत्वेन उपदिश्यते ॥

(6) TURĪYA - PĀDA

Although the Gāyatrī mantra has traditionally only three lines (tri-padā), each of the lines having eight letters (ashṭāksharā), there is also a fourth line, called turīya-pāda, which is said to be hidden or unmanifest. This is called 'darśata', and the source for this reckoning is *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upanishad* (5,14,7):

नमस्ते तुरीयाय दर्शताय पदाय ।
परो रजसेऽसावदोमा प्रापदिति ॥

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However, the fourth pāda of Gāyatri is regarded as belonging to *Atharva-veda* (ātharvaṇa). It represents the spirit (or person) who is hidden in the solar orb (maṇḍalāntargata-purusha), and who is beyond our normal faculties of knowing. This pāda is itself considered a mantra which has liberation as its purpose and it has its own ṛshi, chhandas and devatā:

अस्य श्री दार्शतस्य गायत्रीतुरीयपादमहामन्त्रस्य विमलऋषिः, तुरीयं छन्दः. परमात्मा देवता । मोक्षे विनियोगः ॥

The mantra itself runs thus:

Samhitā-pāṭha

परो रजसेऽसावदोमा प्रापत् ॥

Pada-pāṭha

परः । रजसे । असौ । अदः । मा । प्रापत् । इति ॥

The explanation given is as follows:

(1) हे गायत्री । त्वं त्रैलोक्यपादेन एकपदी असि (भवसि) । त्रयीविद्यारूपेण द्वितीयेन पादेन द्विपदी त्वं भवसि । प्राणादिना तृतीयेन पादेन त्रिपदी असि । (The reference is to the triads: (i) the three lokas (bhūh, bhuvāh and svaha): (ii) the three Vedas (Ṛg, Yajus and Sāma) and (iii) the three vital currents (prāṇa, apāna and vyāna). The three pādas of the Gāyatri-mantra are taken to correspond with these triads).

सूर्यमण्डलान्तर्गतपुरुषलक्षणेन पादेन चतुष्पदी असि । एवमेतैः चतुर्भिः पादैः त्वमुपासकैः पद्यसे ज्ञायसे ॥

The fourth pāda represents the Purusha which is the internal essence or core of the solar orb. It may be noted that Ānanda-tīrtha who identifies the three pādas of Gāyatri as Śveta-

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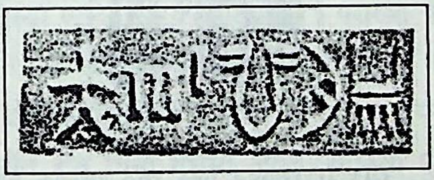
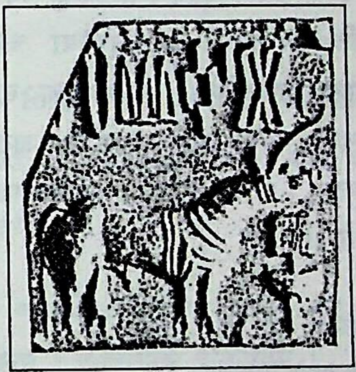
dvīpa, Anantāsana and Vaikuṇṭha respectively, regards the fourth pāda as the heart of all souls (sarva-jīvanta). The other three pādas are outside the svarūpa of the soul (svarūpa-bāhya), while the fourth is the inner controller (antaryāmi or bimba).



(2) अतः परं परेण निरुपाधिकेन स्वेनात्मना त्वमपदसि । पद्यते येन तत्पदम् । न विद्यते पदं यस्याः सा । कुतो हि यस्मात् केनापि न पद्यसे ज़ायसे ? अतोऽव्यवहारविषयाय नमस्ते तुरीयाय दर्शताय पदाय । परो रजसे नमस्कारोऽस्तु ॥ मण्डलान्तर्गतः पुरुषो हि यस्माद् दृश्यते इव, न तु साक्षाद् दृश्यते । ईश्वरस्य अतीन्द्रियत्वात् । अतोऽदर्शतं पदमित्युच्यते ॥ सर्वमेव रजो रजोजातं कामात्मके लोकात्मकं वा । उपर्युपरि हि यस्मादेष सविता तपन् वर्तते अतो रजसः पर इति परो रजा उच्यते ॥ तत्प्रयोजनमाह असौ इति । असौ शत्रुः पापा त्वत्प्राप्तिविघ्नकरोऽदः । पापरूपस्य शत्रोः यत् त्वत्प्राप्तिविघ्नकर्तृत्वं तच्च मम मा प्रापत् । मा प्राप्नोतु ।

इति शब्दः पापक्षयफलोपस्थानमन्त्रः परिसमाप्त्यर्थकः ॥



(7) Gāyatri in the Upanishads

There is an esoteric interpretation of Gāyatri given in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣhad* (5.14.1-66), focussing attention on upāsanā.

(1) The first pāda of Gayatri, consisting of eight letters, is bhūmi, (2) antariksha (4) and dyauh (2), which are the three realms (loka):

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भूमिरन्तरिक्षं द्यौरित्यष्टावक्षराण्यष्टाक्षरं ह वा एकं गायत्र्यै पदम् । एतदुहैवास्या एतत्स यावदेषु त्रिषु लोकेषु तावद्ध जयति, योऽस्या एतदेवं पदं वेद ॥

(Śaṁkara comments : सर्वच्छन्दसां हि गायत्रीच्छन्दः प्रधान भूतम् । तत्प्रयोक्तृ गय त्राणाद् गायत्रीति वक्ष्यति । न चान्येषां च्छन्दसां प्रयोक्तृप्राणत्राणसामर्थ्यम् । प्राणात्मभूता च सा । सर्वच्छन्दसां चात्मा प्राणः । प्राणश्च क्षतत्राणात् क्षत्रमित्युक्तम् । प्राणश्च गायत्री । तस्मात्तदुपासनमेव विधित्स्यते ॥

... गायत्र्याः पदं पादः प्रथमः भूयादिलक्षणस्त्रैलोक्यात्मा ।)

(2) The second pāda consists of eight letters, referring to the three branches of learning (vidyā): ṛk (2), yajūmshi (4), sāma (2):

ऋचो यजूंषि सामानीत्यष्टाक्षराणि अष्टाक्षरं ह वा एकं गायत्र्यै पदम् । एतदु हैवास्या एतत्स यावतीयं त्रयी विद्या तावद्ध जयति ... ॥

(3) The third pāda consists of eight letters, signifying the three vital currents in the living human body (prāṇa): prāṇa (2), apāna (3), vyāna (vi-yāna) (3):

प्राणोपानो व्यान इत्यष्टाक्षराणि अष्टाक्षरं ह वा एकं गायत्र्यै पदम् । एतदु हैवास्या एतत्स यावदिदं प्राणि तावद्ध जयति ... ॥

(4) If these are the three pādas of the classical gāyatri-chhandas, there is a fourth pāda, which is mystical in import, in the Gāyatri-mantra. This refers to Savitṛ or the solar person (maṇḍalāntargata-purusha), who comes to light, or becomes visible, in the heart of the devotee (hence called 'darśata'). This is the transcendental presence, beyond the three worlds (paro rajasā), and illumining the

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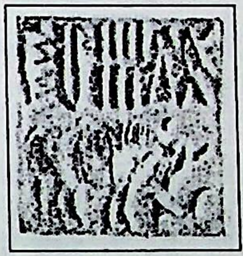
worlds (tapati), lording (ādhipatya-bhāvena) over them. This pāda also may be taken to have eight letters: paro (2), rajās (2), ya (1), tapati (3). The Gāyatri of three pādas in fact rests on this fourth pāda (pratishṭhita). This is how it is established in the real (satye).

अथास्या एतदेव तुरीयं दर्शतं पदम् । परोरजा य एष तपति यद्वै चतुर्थं तत्तुरीयं दर्शतं पदमिति । ददृश इव ह्येष परोरजा इति । सर्वमु ह्येवैष रज उपर्युपरि तपत्येवं ह्येव श्रिया यशसा तपति, योऽस्या एतदेवं पदं वेद ॥

(comments : अस्याः प्रकृतायाः गायत्र्या एतदेव वक्ष्यमाणं तुरीयं दर्शतं पदं परोरजा य एष तपति। दर्शतं पदमित्यस्य कोऽर्थ इत्युच्यते - सर्वं समस्तमुह्येवैष मण्डलस्थः पुरुषो रजो रजोजातं समस्तं लोकं इत्यर्थः । उपर्युपरि आधिपत्यभावेन सर्वं लोकं रजोजातं तपति । ... यथाऽसौ सविता सर्वाधिपत्य लक्षणाया श्रिया यशसा च ख्यात्या तपति ... ॥

5) The real (satya) is Savitṛ, for it is the very essence of all things



with form and without form, of the world of living beings and material things:

सैषा गायत्र्येतस्मिस्तुरीये दर्शते पदे परोरजसि प्रतिष्ठिता । तद्वैतत्सत्ये प्रतिष्ठितम् ।

(comments : सैषा त्रिपदोक्ता या त्रैलोक्य-त्रैविद्य-प्राणलक्षणा गायत्री एतस्मिंश्चतुर्थे तुरीये दर्शते पदे परोरजसि प्रतिष्ठिता । मूर्तामूर्तरसत्वादादित्यस्य । ... तथा मूर्तामूर्तात्मकं जगत् त्रिपदा गायत्र्यादित्ये प्रतिष्ठिता । तद्रसत्वात्सह त्रिभिः पादैः ।)

(गायत्र्याः परेरजसि प्रतिष्ठितत्वम् । परोरजसः सत्याख्ये चक्षुषि । सत्यस्य बलाख्ये प्राणे च प्रतिष्ठितत्वम् ।)

(6) Gāyatri is explained as the protector of the vital currents and sense-faculties (prāṇāh)

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The formation of the word 'gāyatri' is from the two constituents : (i) 'gayāh' (the prāṇas or the vital currents and all sense-faculties including mind), and (ii) 'tattre' (it protects, saves, preserves) ('gayāns tattre, tasmād gāyatrī nāma). In fact, Gāyatri is itself the prāṇa, and in prāṇa all the divinities (the spirits activating the faculties) become one; and so do all knowledge, action and the consequences thereof. Being the prāṇa, Gāyatrī is the very self of all phenomenal existence (jagatah ātmā).

सा हैषा गयांस्तत्रे । प्राणा वै गयाः । तत्प्राणांस्तत्रे तद्गयांस्तत्रे तस्माद् गायत्री नाम ॥ (त्रैङ् पालने, तस्माल्लिट् रूपं. पालयति स्म।)

(comments : सैषा गायत्री प्राणः । अतो गायत्र्यां जगत्प्रतिष्ठितम् । यस्मिन्प्राणे सर्वे देवा एकं भवन्ति । सर्वे वेदाः कर्माणि फलं च । सैव गायत्री प्राणरूपा सती जगत आत्मा । सा हैषा गायांस्तत्रे त्रातवती । के पुनर्गयाः ? प्राणा वागादयो वै गयाः । शब्दकरणात् । तांस्तत्रे सैषा गायत्री । ... गायत्राणाद् गायत्रीति प्रथिता ॥)

(7) Thus Gāyatri has four pādas; and a pāda is etymologically significant as that which moves, goes, activates, and enlivens (padyase). If all this is conditioned by the worlds, branches of learning, the vital currents and the spirit which is transcendental,

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there is another aspect to the mantra which is not so conditioned (hence called 'apad') and this is Savitṛ in its real nature, unconditioned by aught, and altogether unapproachable. For the devotee therefore, the fourth pāda (darśata) is worthy of worship and contemplation.

तस्या उपस्थानम् । गायत्र्यस्येकपदी द्विपदी त्रिपदी चतुष्पद्यपदसि । न हि पद्यसे । नमस्ते तुरीयाय दर्शताय पदाय परोरजसेऽसावदो मा प्रापदिति ॥

(Śamkara comments : उपेत्य स्थानं उपस्थानम् । उपेत्य स्थानं नमस्करणमनेन मन्त्रेण । कोऽसौ मन्त्रः इत्याह - हे गायत्र्यसि भवसि त्रैलोक्यपादेनैकपदी । त्रयीविद्यारूपेण द्वितीयेन द्विपदी । प्राणादिना तृतीयेन त्रिपद्यसि । चतुर्थेन तरीयेण चतुष्पद्यसि । एवं चतुर्भिः पादैः उपासकैः पद्यसे ज्ञायसे । अतः परं परेण निरुपाधिकेन स्वेनात्मनाऽपदसि । अविद्यमानं पदं यस्यास्तव येन पद्यसे सा त्वं अपदसि । यस्मान्न हि पद्यसे । नेतिनेत्यात्मत्वात् । अतो व्यवहारविषयाय नमस्ते तुरीयाय ... ॥)

(अपरिच्छिन्नमहिमत्वात् परिच्छिन्नतया ज्ञातुं न शक्यसे । RangaRāmānuja]

Another early Upanishad, *Chhāndogya* (3,11,1) also refers to this mantra. Gāyatri signifies all beings, past, present and future. It is vāk, representing the vital currents (prāṇa). It is speech (vāk) in the sense of recitation of the mantra (gāyati), which recitation facilitates protection of the one who recites (trāyate):

गायत्री वा इदं सर्वं भूतं यदिदं किञ्च ।
वाग् वै गायत्री ।
वाग् वा इदं सर्वं भूतम् ।
गायति च त्रायते च ॥१॥

(comments : इदं सर्वं भूतं प्राणिजातं । यत् किञ्च स्थावरं जङ्गमं वा । ... यस्माद्वाक्यशब्दरूपा सती सर्वं भूतं गायति शब्दयति असौ गौरसौ अश्व इति च । त्रायते च रक्षति । अमुष्मान्मा भैषीः किं ते भयमुत्थितं इत्यादिना सर्वतो भयान्निवर्त्यमानो वाचा त्रातः स्यात् । यद्वाग् भूतं गायति च त्रायते च गायत्र्येव तद्गायति त्रायते च । वाचोऽनन्यत्वाद् गायत्र्याः । गानात् त्राणाच्च गायत्र्याः गायत्रीत्वम् ॥)

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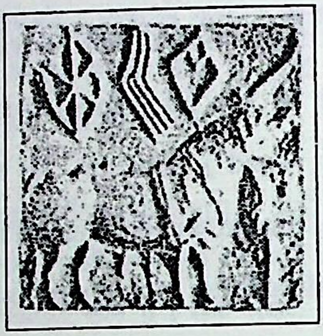
(2) Gāyatri is the very earth (pṛthivī), which is the foundation for all beings and all things; no being or thing can ever go beyond the earth. All beings and things are indeed related to the earth, by having been established on it.

या वै सा गायत्रीयं वाव सा येयं पृथिव्यस्यां हीदं सर्वं भूतं प्रतिष्ठितम् । एतामेव नातिशीयते ॥२॥

(comments : या वै सैवंलक्षणा सर्वभूतरूपा गायत्री । पृथिवी गायत्री - सर्वभूतसम्बन्धात् । अस्यां पृथिव्यां हि यस्मात् स्थावरं जङ्गमं च भूतं प्रतिष्ठितम्। एतामेव पृथिवीं नातिवर्तत इति एतत् । यथा गानत्राणाभ्यां भूतसम्बन्धो गायत्र्याः, एवं भूतप्रतिष्ठानाद् भूतसंबद्धा पृथिवी । अतो गायत्री पृथिवी ॥)



(3) The earth (pṛthivī) is represented by the human body, on which are established all the vital currents and sense-functions, and which they do not ever transcend.

या वै सा पृथिवीयं वाव सा यदिदं अस्मिन्पुरुषे शरीरमस्मिन्हि इमे प्राणाः प्रतिष्ठिता । एतदेव नातिशीयन्ते ॥३॥

(यदिदमस्मिन्पुरुषे कार्यकारणसंघाते जीवति शरीरं, पार्थिवत्वाच्छरीरस्य । अस्मिन् हि इमे प्राणा भूतशब्दवाच्याः प्रतिष्ठिताः । अतः पृथिवीवद् भूतशब्दवाच्यप्राणप्रतिष्ठानात् शरीरं गायत्री । एतदेव यस्यच्छरीरं नातिशीयन्ते प्राणाः॥)

(4) When the human body is referred to as the very foundation, the heart (hrdaya) is what is actually

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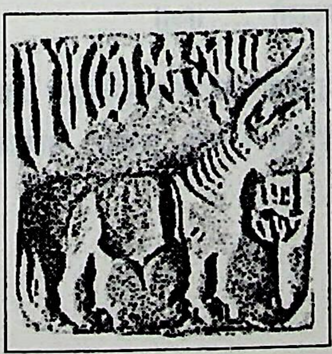
meant, for all the vital currents and sense-functions are in fact established in the heart of a being.

यद्वै तत्पुरुषे शरीरमिदं वाव तद्यदिदमास्मिन्नन्तः पुरुषे हृदयमस्मिन् हीमे प्राणाः प्रतिष्ठिता । एतदेव नातिशीयन्ते ॥४॥

Gāyatri therefore represents the heart-lotus, which is in the centre of being.

(अन्तः मध्ये पुरुषे हृदयं पुण्डरीकाख्यमेतद् गायत्री। भूतशब्दवाच्याः प्राणाः ।)



(5) Gāyatri has four pādas, and is of six kinds. The four pādas suggest six letters in each pāda, thus making a total of twenty-four letters, characteristic of the gāyatri-chhandas. The six kinds of the mantra refer to (i) vāg (speech); (ii) bhūta (living beings), (iii) pṛthivī (earth); (iv) śarīra (body); (v) hṛdaya (heart), and (vi) prāṇa (vital currents).

सैषा चतुष्पदा षड्विधा गायत्री ॥५॥

(सैषा चतुष्पदा षडक्षरपदा छन्दोरूपा सती भविति गायत्री । षड्विधा वाग्-भूत-पृथिवी-शरीर-हृदय-प्राणरूपा सती ।)

(6) This idea is derived from a mantra in *Ṛgveda* (10,90,2), well-

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known as Purusha-sūkta, where the majesty of the Purusha (viz.Savitṛ) is described: all that exists, as the phenomenal and transactional world is but one quarter of this Purusha; and three quarters of him are in the upper realms, beyond our ken or reach:

तदेतद् ऋचात्राभ्यनुक्तम् (१०,७०,२)-

तावानस्य महिमा ततो ज्यायांश्च पूरुषः ।

पादोऽस्य सर्वा भूतानि त्रिपादस्यामृतं दिवीति ॥६॥

(तावानस्य गायत्र्याख्यस्य ब्रह्मणः समस्तस्य महिमा विभूतिविस्तारः । यावान् चतुष्पात् षड्विधश्च ब्रह्मणो विकारः पादो गायत्रीति व्याख्यातः । अतस्तस्माद् विकारलक्षणाद् गायत्र्याख्याद् वाचारम्भणमात्रात् ततो ज्यायान् महत्तरश्च परमार्थसत्यरूपोऽविकारः पूरुषः । पुरुषः सर्वपूरणात् पुरिशयनाच्च । ... सर्वा सर्वाणि भूतानि तेजोबन्नादीनि सस्थावरजङ्गमानि । त्रिपात् त्रयः पादाः अस्य सोऽयं त्रिपात् । त्रिपादमृतं पुरुषाख्यं समस्तस्य गायत्र्यात्मनो दिवि द्योतनवति स्वात्मनि अवस्थितं इत्यर्थः ।)

(समस्तगायत्री आत्मा ।)

(7) This Savitṛ or Purusha is in fact the Brahman, the supreme and absolute spirit, who is settled in the heart of all beings, causing the three states of existence; wakefulness, dream and deep sleep. He is complete and perfect in the last state.

यद्वै तद् ब्रह्म इतीदं वाव तद्योऽयं बहिर्धा पुरुषादाकाशो ... ॥७॥

(यद्वै तत् त्रिपादमृतं गायत्रीमुखेनोक्तं ब्रह्म इतीदं वाव तदिदमेव तत् । बहिः पुरुषात् आकाशो भौतिको यो वै ...)

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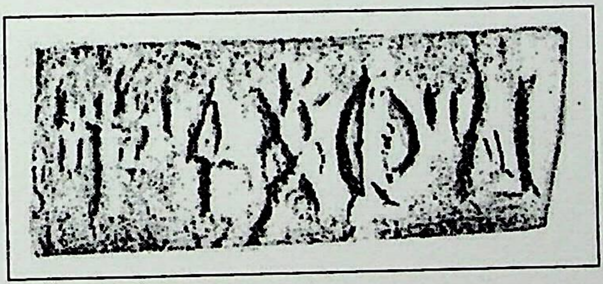
अयं वाव स योऽयमन्तः पुरुषे आकाशो यो वै सोऽन्तः पुरुष आकाशः ॥८॥

(अन्तः पुरुषे शरीर आकाशः ...)

अयं वाव स योऽयमन्तर्हृदय आकाशः तदेतत्पूर्णम्। अप्रवर्ति ॥९॥

(अन्तर्हृदये हृदयपुण्डरीके। हार्दाकाशाख्यं ब्रह्म पूर्णं सर्वगतं, न हृदयमात्रपरिच्छिन्नमिति मन्तव्यम्। यद्यपि हृदयाकाशे चेतः समाधीयते। अप्रवर्ति न कुतश्चित् प्रवर्तितुं शीलं अस्य ... तदनुच्छित्तिधर्मकम्।)



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